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EDITED BY

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HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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INTRODUCTION

'I HOLD, as some have done before me, that the human mind degenerates in America, and that the superiority of the white race, such as it is, is only kept up by intercourse with Europe.' PEACOCK (*Gryll Grange*), 1860.

★ ★ ★

'If material life could be made perfect, as (in a very small way) it was perhaps for a moment among the Greeks, would not that of itself be a most admirable achievement? . . . And possibly on that basis of perfected material life, a new art and philosophy would grow unawares, not similar to what we call by those names, but having the same relation to the life beneath which art and philosophy amongst us ought to have had, but never have had. You see, I am content to let the past bury its dead. It does not seem to me that we can impose on America the task of imitating Europe.' SANTAYANA, letter to Pearsall Smith, 1921.

★ ★ ★

'America is no place for an artist. A corn-fed hog enjoys a better life than a creative writer.' HENRY MILLER, 1945.

★ ★ ★

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Thursday, 28 November. Nantucket light. In cold, sunny afternoon the bright red lightship bobbing to starboard is the first sign that our ten-day prep-school voyage is coming to an end, we are as happy as the discoverers of Virginia in 1584. 'We found shoal water, where we smelt so sweet and so strong a smell, as if we had been in the midst of some delicate garden abounding with all kind of odoriferous flowers, by which we were assured that the land could not be far distant.' No more dull dormitory life, eight to a cabin, no hurried monotonous meals (without drink, for our ship, *The Highland Governess*, is dry), no more scrambling for chairs, or searching for conversation, no more the pitching and tossing of the battered old bureaucrappy troopship over the endless empty heaving dishwater of the autumn Atlantic. Tomorrow our personalities will be handed back to us. Agitation amongst the young Canadian engineers in my cabin. 'Gee, I can't wait to be sweating over a corpse.'

To bed excited, with lights and lighthouses visible, and in the distance the Long Island beaches. All the voyage an immense euphoria about U.S.A., Baedeker alternating with Baudelaire: prospect of seeing California and far south-west! Europe seems infinitely remote; England

like a week-end cottage which one has abandoned with all the washing-up undone. I understand the New World *motif*. Actuality, the ideal of inhabiting a continuous present.

Friday. Up at six to see New York in the darkness—sunrise, the Narrows, the first houses, the ferries, '*l'aurore rose et verte*', the Statue of Liberty, skyscrapers in fog, general impression much more European than I had expected. Interminable wait before going ashore during which the passengers all look exactly as they did on the first day—'their sweating selves, but worse'. Off about 12.30, then through customs and in taxi to hotel; my driver asks—and gets—six dollars. Tony and Wystan are there and we go off to lunch at my choice, the *King of the Sea*, exotic and rather bad, but Third Avenue, red and raffish, has a fascinating Continental charm. Auden warns us of the perils of the big city, he seems obsessed with hold-ups, the proper use of the subway system, and jumping to it at the traffic lights; his welcome is like that of the town mouse to the country mouse in the Disney film. I discover only later that his battle with the traffic lights is a kind of personal obsession with the machine age, a challenge to his desire to pass efficiently in the crowd. Hugging our wallets tightly and plunging over the crossings we proceed in short rushes to the Holliday book-shop, an oasis where carefully chosen books are sold like hand-made cushions; here Wystan introduces the two new mice and leaves us, with instructions on how to take the subway back. That evening an elaborate dinner with Peter at Voisin's, much-anticipated on the *Highland Governess*, (disappointing except for avocado pears). The new mice compare notes. Peter says the U.S.A. is a place where only the very rich can be the least different from anyone else, but where the poor are not crushed and stunted (as in England, where the upper class is twice as tall as the lower). Here, he said, the poor are picturesque and often beautiful—the true creators of the American dream—and that there was also a great poetry about the country when one travelled over it. On the other hand it was awful seeing nothing but copies—of buildings, houses, furniture, pictures, and where the originals were in private hands they gave no intimacy. I found the skyscrapers depressing, a huge black ferro-concrete architecture of necessity shutting out the light from the treeless streets

'Whose constant care is not to please
But to remind of our, and Adam's curse
And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse'.

Saturday. To the Lafayette after strolling round delicious Washington Square which in the morning sun considerably revives me from the gloomy thoughts of the night before, sleepless beside the sizzling radiator. Greenwich Village, which reminds me more and more of

Soho, is still cheap, and apparently not quite spoilt, 'the one place in New York where different income groups are still mixed up, and where the queers and misfits from the Middle West can all find sanctuary'. 'There is an immense cleavage here', says Tony at lunch, 'between the intellectuals and everyone else, who are really quite uninterested in books, though they like to keep up with the best-sellers. Intellectuals thus have to join political movements or attach themselves to causes or become dons for they cannot otherwise survive. They become over-serious, it is a whole-time business, "culture" requires one hundred per cent efficiency at it, everyone becomes extremely bellicose and erudite; publishers work so hard that even they have no time for pleasure, and without pleasures the intellectual becomes uncivilized, a pedantic variation of the business man.'

After lunch to the top of Rockefeller Center. Asked the bald elevator boy on the last lap why we were told to face outwards. He made no reply at first, then broke down into helpless laughter; the only words to come from him were, 'It's all so silly'—mountain sickness, perhaps. The view was the first beautiful thing I had seen in New York, where one can go for weeks without the knowledge of being surrounded by water. If one need never descend below the fortieth floor New York would seem the most beautiful city in the world, its skies and cloudscapes are tremendous, its southern latitude is revealed only in its light (for vegetation and architecture are strictly northern); here one can take in the Hudson, the East river, the mid-town and down-town colonies of skyscrapers, Central Park and the magnificent new bridges and curving arterial highways and watch the evening miracle, the lights going on over all these frowning termitaries against a sky of royal-blue velvet only to be paralleled in Lisbon or Palermo. A southern city, with a southern pullulation of life, yet with a northern winter imposing a control; the whole nordic energy and sanity of living crisply enforcing its authority for three of the four seasons on the violet-airy babel of tongues and races; this tension gives New York its unique concentration and makes it the supreme metropolis of the present. Dinner with Auden's friend C. At last the luxury of poverty; stairs, no lift, leaking arm-chairs, a bed-sitting-room with bath-kitchenette curtained off, guests with European teeth (who was it said that Americans have no faces?), a gramophone library, untidy books not preserved in cardboard coffins, an incompetent gas stove—and an exquisite dinner cooked and served by C. Clam-juice mixed with chicken broth, chops with a sauce and lima beans, lederkranz cheese and pumpernickel, dry Californian wine. Argument afterwards about poetry interspersed with selections from Wystan's favourite operas. They are many. Much conversation about the U.S. and W. continues to propound his point of view (see his introduction to *The American Scene*, HORIZON, No. 86). Though very

pro-British (his bedside bible remains a work on the mineralogy of the Lake District compiled by a friend of his father's), he reverts always to the same argument, that a writer needs complete anonymity, he must break away from the European literary 'happy family' with its family love and jokes and jealousies and he must reconsider all the family values. Possibly he could do this in any large impersonal society, but only in America is it so easy for the anonymous immigrant to make money. He is, of course, extremely lonely, but then so is every American; 'you have no idea', he says, 'how lonely even the married are'. I make the inevitable point that surely it is important to live in attractive surroundings, and in New York (where all want to live) only the rich can afford them. Why live an exile in a black slum, looking out on a fire-escape, in a city which is intolerable in winter and summer, when for the same money one might flourish in Regent's Park or on the Ile Saint Louis? But then, I imagine Auden replying, you would at once have the family all about you, and he concentrates on my return journey to Washington Square. Walking back from the subway station at two in the morning I find a second-hand bookstore open all night in West Eighth Street, I go in and buy more Cummings; to purchase early works of Cummings in the small hours, in the heart of

'the little barbarous Greenwich perfumed fake'

and march home with them in the frosty night, while the tugs hoot and central heating plants under the long black street puff away through its many manholes like geysers on the moon, that is to enjoy that anonymous urban civilization that Auden has chosen, and of which Baudelaire dreamed and despaired.

★ ★ ★

Long past diary-keeping now, I am slave of telephone and engagement book. Europe is a dream, and Auden's anonymity equally remote. We are plunged in New York literary life and try to analyse the swirl and eddy of that vigorous, intricate, cordial group of groupings. America is not Europe, in neither its places nor its people nor its values, and it is only by making the most desperate adjustment that a true European writer can remain himself here. Thus in the United States literature is fighting a losing battle against the Book Business which we can hardly comprehend. The crucial factor is the high cost of book-production which renders the printing of small editions (under 10,000) uneconomic; the tendency is therefore to go all out for the best seller and, with a constant eye on Hollywood, to spend immense sums on publicity to bring about one of these jack-pots. But even without Hollywood there are large sums to be made from book-of-the-month clubs, cheap pulp editions, serial rights, and so the result of this pressure is a transformation of the literary scene into mass-production. The

American public are cajoled into reading the book of the month, and only the book of the month, and for that month only. Last year's book is as unfashionable as last year's car. The standard of living among publishers is also ridiculously high; huge offices among skyscrapers employ armies of bright and competitive young men. I know of one whose lawyers forbade him to start a business of his own as his capital was but a hundred thousand dollars. The hunt for young authors who, while maintaining a prestige value (with a role for Ingrid Bergman), may yet somehow win the coveted jack-pot, is feverish and incessant. Last year's authors (most of the names that have just reached England) are pushed aside and this year's—the novelist Jean Stafford, her poet husband Robert Lowell or the dark horse, Truman Capote—are invariably mentioned. They may be quite unread, but their names, like a new issue on the market, are constantly on the lips of those in the know.¹ 'Get Capote'—at this minute the words are resounding on many a sixtieth floor, and 'get him' of course means make him and break him, smother him with laurels and then vent on him the obscure hatred which is inherent in the notion of another's superiority. 'In Ngoio, a province of the ancient kingdom of the Congo,' Frazer relates, 'the rule obtains that the chief who assumes the cap of sovereignty is always killed on the night after his coronation.' But in civilized Ngoio the throne is generally vacant. America is the one country (greatly to its credit) where an author can still make a fortune for life from one book, it is also the country where everyone is obsessed with the idea, where publishers live like stockbrokers, and where authors, like film-stars, are condemned to meditate from minute to minute last year's income tax, next week's publicity. It is all part of the American tragedy—that, in the one country left where necessities are cheap, where a room and food and wine and clothes and cigarettes and travel are within everyone's reach, to be poor is still disgraceful. The American way of life is one of the most effective the world has known, but about the end of life Americans are more in the dark than any people since the Gauls of Tacitus. What is the American way? It may be summed up as a creed which is partly the effect of climate, partly of vitamins and calories, partly of pioneer experiences, partly of the inherited memory of what was bad in Europe. The American way assumes a world without God, yet a world in which happiness is obtainable, but obtainable only through a constant exertion of the will towards a practical goal and of the mind towards solution of present problems. Riches and success are the outward signs that this goal is being attained, that the human organism is making full use of its energy

¹ For this reason we have tried to avoid literary prize-givings in this number and to present a cross-section of a living ant-heap, not a case of mounted butterflies fast-fading and wrongly named.

and faculties; a whispering of wives, expert at farewell (three is the lucky number), indicates that the proper stages on the journey are being reached, and handsome, healthy, indifferent children are present to carry on when the wage-earner passes over; any moments of disquieting leisure are rendered innocuous by extraverted social activities with colleagues of similar status and their families, or sent flying by alcohol. The esteem of society is enormously important and can only be held by a decent, kindly and acquisitive way of living. Courage, humour, hard work and the affectionate co-operation of uncles and cousins make endurable the darker side: sickness, insolvency, hang-overs, death and Mother. Seldom has a more harmless or profitable philosophy of life been evolved, a more resolute opponent of art, remorse and introspection, or one further removed from the futile European speculation about the Soul or the Past, the moping about sin and death, the clinging to moribund methods, ideals, relationships, the pangs of ennui. If one but were permitted to take human beings at their own valuation, the American way would seem the most desirable solution to our predicament, for it offers a full life built round the notions of freedom, independence, hard-work and the family; the personality without a thought stoically working itself out through action. But the end? What is old age in America? After sixty, where do old people vanish? Why are the bustling battalions of unwanted Moms so elegantly pathetic? And the rich who have pocketed their winnings, why are they so glum? And what is this way, in reality, but forty years' drudgery in an office while the divorced wives play bridge together and the children drift apart; what is the getting of money but a constant source of ulcers and anxiety, till apoplexy or heart-failure clamp down? And why does alcohol, which should oil the wheels of intercourse, so flood and clog them that there is a drunk in each so respectable family; and why the immense rush to psychiatry, the high rate of madness and suicide? Why, after midnight, do so many Americans fight or weep? Grown-up while still a child, middle-aged at thirty, a boy only among his cronies of the golf course or the lunch club, coffined or cremated at about sixty-three, the American business male with his forceful, friendly, unlined face carries within him a dust-bowl of despair which renders him far more endearing and closer to Europe than his dutiful efforts to conceal it. Action, often violent and destructive, not contemplation, is his remedy, but his awareness of the tragic human predicament goes very deep.

This leads us on to one of the finest traits in American character. At a time when the American way, backed by American resources, has made the country into the greatest power the world has known, there has never been more doubting and questioning of the purpose of the American process; the higher up one goes the more searching becomes

this self-criticism, the deeper the thirst for a valid mystique of humanity. Those who rule America, who formulate its foreign policy and form its opinion, are enormously conscious of their responsibility and of the total inadequacy of the crude material philosophy of life in which they grew up. The bloody-minded, the smug, the imperialist, the fascist, are in a minority. Seldom, in fact, has an unwilling world been forced to tolerate, through its own folly, a more unwilling master.

The New York scene reveals many traces of this unrest. Insecurity reigns. Almost everyone hates his job. Psychiatrists of all schools are as common as monks in the Thebaid. 'Who is your analyst?' will disarm any interviewer; books on how to be happy, how to attain peace of mind, how to win friends and influence people, how to breathe, how to achieve a cheap sentimental humanism at other people's expense, how to become a Chinaman like Lin Yutang and make a lot of money, how to be a Bahá'i or breed chickens (*The Ego and I*) all sell in millions. Religious houses of retreat merge imperceptibly into disintoxication clinics and private mental homes for the victims of traffic lights and nervous breakdowns. 'Alcoholics Anonymous' slink like house detectives around the literary cocktail parties. A most interesting phenomenon is the state of mind apparent in *Time*, *Life*, *The New Yorker*, and similar magazines. Thus *Life*, with its enormous circulation, comes out with excellently written leading articles on the dearth of tragedy in American literature or the meaning of suffering, and a closer acquaintance reveals them to be staffed by some of the most interesting and sensitive minds in that insensitive city.

It is easy to make fun of these three papers, but in fact they are not funny. Although they have very large circulations indeed, they only just miss being completely honourable and serious journals, in fact 'highbrow'. Hence the particular nemesis, ordeal by shiny paper, of those who manage them; they work very hard, and deliver *almost* the best work of which they are capable. But the gap is never quite closed between the public and the high-brow writer, because the American organism is not quite healthy. I mention this at some length because it indicates how very nearly New York has achieved the ideal of a humanist society, where the best of which an artist is capable is desired by the greatest number. Thurber's drawings, Hersey's *Hiroshima*, the essays of Edmund Wilson or Mary MacCarthy, *Time's* anonymous reviews, show that occasionally the gap is closed; when it is closed permanently the dream of Santayana will be near fulfilment.

But these anxiety-forming predicaments (*Time's* stomach is a common trouble) are for those who live in New York and have to earn their living. To the visiting non-competitive European all is unending delight. The shops, the bars, the women, the faces in the street, the excellent and innumerable restaurants, the glitter of '21, the old-world

lethargy of the Lafayette, the hazy views of the East River or Central Park over tea in some apartment at the magic hour when the concrete icebergs suddenly flare up; the impressionist pictures in one house, the exotic trees or bamboo furniture in another, the chink of 'old-fashioned' with their little glass pestles, the divine glories—Egyptian, Etruscan, French—of the Metropolitan Museum, the felicitous contemporary assertion of the Museum of Modern Art, the snow, the sea-breezes, the late suppers with the Partisans, the reelings-home down the black steam-spitting canyons, the Christmas trees lit up beside the liquorice ribbons of cars on Park Avenue, the Gotham Book Mart, the shabby cosiness of the Village, all go to form an unforgettable picture of what a city ought to be: that is, continuously insolent and alive, a place where one can buy a book or meet a friend at any hour of the day or night, where every language is spoken and xenophobia almost unknown, where every purse and appetite is catered for, where every street and every quarter and the people who inhabit them are fulfilling their function, not slipping back into apathy, indifference, decay. If Paris is the setting for romance, New York is the perfect city in which to get over one, to get over anything. Here the lost *douceur de vivre* is forgotten and the intoxication of living takes its place.

What is this intoxication? Firstly, health. The American diet is energy producing. Health is not just the absence of disease but a positive physical sensation. The European, his voice dropping a tone every day, finds himself growing stouter, balder, more extraverted and aggressive, conscious of a place in what is still, despite lip-service, a noisily masculine society. Then there is the sensation of belonging to a great nation in its present prosperous period of triumph. But in addition to 'feeling good' the Americans are actively generous and kind and it is this profusion of civilities which ravishes the visitor. American hosts are not only thoughtful; it is almost dangerous to express a wish before them, to such unobtrusive lengths will they go to fulfil it. American hostesses bring their ingrained perfectionism into daily living. It is a society more formal, more painstaking, more glamorous and more charitable than our poor old bitter, battered, pennywise European equivalent—one may pine inevitably for a whiff of honest English malice, outspokenness and bad manners but one should not be proud of such nostalgias for we have largely forgotten the degree to which leisure, money, goodwill and taste can still make life agreeable. One thing only seems to me impossible in New York—to write well. Not because the whirl and pleasurable bustle of the gregarious life built around writing is so irresistible, not because it is almost impossible to find a quiet room near a tree, or to stay in of an evening, not because intelligent conversation with a kindred spirit is hard to come by (it is not), but because this glowing, blooming, stimulating material perfection over-excites the

mind, causing it to precipitate into wit and conversation those ideas which might set into literature. Wit and wisecrack, not art, are the thorny flowers on this rocky island, this concrete Capri; they form the subject for which our proud new bass is given. 'Yah,' one may say instead of 'yes', but when 'fabulous', 'for Chris' sakes', 'it stinks', 'way off the beam' and 'Bourbon over ice' roar off our lips, when one notices with distaste the Europeanism of others—it's time for flight, for dripping plane-trees, the grizzling circle of hypercritical friends, the fecund London inertia where nothing stirs but the soul.

What are the alternatives? One may stay on and coarsen—many English writers do—into shapely executives or Park Avenue brandy philosophers, one can fight like Auden for privacy and isolation, or grow bitter and fitzrovia in the 'Village atmosphere' or one can try elsewhere. Cape Cod or Connecticut have their devotees, but these havens are the rewards of success, not its incubators. Boston, last stronghold of a leisured class, offers a select enlightenment of which a contemporary Englishman is just downright unworthy. Washington has immense charm, the streets of Georgetown with their ilexes and magnolias and little white boxes are like corners of Chelsea or Exeter, but a political nexus offers few resources to the artist who is outside the administration, and the lovely surroundings (the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries form the most insidiously appealing of all American landscapes to the home-sick European), are not places in which he can hope to earn a living.

Let us try California. The night plane circles round La Guardia, leaves behind the icy water of the Sound and that sinister Stonehenge of economic man, the Rockefeller Center, to disappear over the Middle West. Vast rectangles of light occasionally indicate Chicago or some other well-planned city till at six in the morning we ground in the snow of Omaha. As it grows light the snow-fields over the whole agricultural region of the Middle West grow more intricate, the Great Plains give way to the Bad Lands, poison ivy to poison oak, the sinuosities of the Platte rivers to the High Plains, the mountains of Wyoming, the Continental Divide. All semblance of European structure vanishes; Salt Lake appears as a radiant lunar landscape in the wan sunshine, the Great Salt Lake desert glistening beyond it, fading into other deserts, last, into the formidable Carson Sink. It is hard to picture the immense desolation of the West in winter, the wilderness of snow over fifteen hundred miles of plateau and mountain, till suddenly, unfrozen, among the pine woods of the Rockies a blue alpine lake appears, Lake Tahoe, and beyond a great glowing explosion of orange sky, woods without snow, green hills with no trace of winter, the darker patches of citrus orchard, the line of irrigation canals, the Sacramento Valley—California and the enormous pale Pacific.

San Francisco is a city of charming people, hideous buildings, mostly erected after the earthquake in the style of 1910, with a large Chinatown in which everything is fake—except the Chinese—with a tricky humid climate (though sunny in winter), and a maddening indecision in the vegetation—which can never decide if it belongs to the North or the South and achieves a Bournemouth compromise. The site is fantastically beautiful, the orange bridge, the seven hills, the white houses, the waterside suburbs across the Golden Gate give it a lovely strangeness, the sunset view from the 'Top of the Mark' is unique—but the buildings lack all dignity and flavour. Yet San Francisco and its surroundings, Marin County, Berkeley, Sausalito with its three climates, San Mateo where lemon and birch tree grow together, probably represent the most attractive all-the-year-round alternative to Europe which the world can provide. If I were an escapist, that is, rather more determined to escape, I would fly from the showy death-beds of the countries I love and settle in Central California. There Europe is twice as far as from New York which itself is so remote that it becomes a kind of Europe, a delicious object of the annual holiday, yet the temperate European climate and way of life still prevail. A hundred miles to the south is some of the loveliest country I have ever seen, the Monterey peninsula and the redwood hills of Big Sur. At Monterey the Pacific for once imitates the Mediterranean, the vast cold treacherous sail-less ocean flows in sunny, sandy coves round the pine and cypress woods of the peninsula, the enormous sea-lions bark all night off the shore. South of Carmel the wild Santa Lucia mountains with their forests of evergreen oak and holly roll southwards for two hundred miles of green Dorset downs, five thousand feet high. Here the Pacific roars at the foot of inky cliffs, pouring in immense black strands of weed, whose roots bob like human heads, while out to sea the whales, drifting south in pairs, spout lazily by. On one of these cliffs surrounded by editions of Rimbaud lives Henry Miller with his wife and child. His house is a romantic shack, built by the convicts while making the road, for which he pays six dollars rent a month. A mile or so further is a hot open-air sulphur bath. Once a week the groceries come out from Carmel. There is some fog in winter, but generally it is sunny. The sea is there, the mountains and a bathing pool in the redwood forest. Here is one writer who has solved the problem of how to live happily in America without hacking, writing unstintingly of himself and the Cosmos, decently impervious to this remote grandiose wilderness of mountain and sea.

Hollywood, Los Angeles are too well described in this issue. On the whole those who have loved the Mediterranean will not be reconciled here and those who really care for books can never settle down to the

impermanent world of the cinema. Those who do not love the cinema have no business to come. There are exceptional cases of intellectual adaptation of which Huxley's is the most remarkable. The Californian climate and food creates giants but not genius, but Huxley has filled out into a kind of Apollonian majesty; he radiates both intelligence and serene goodness, and is the best possible testimony to the simple life he leads and the faith he believes in, the only English writer, I think, entirely to have benefited by his transplantation and whom one feels exquisitely refreshed by meeting. Huxley and Isherwood incidentally join hands with Auden in that all three believe (somewhat masochistically) that the peculiar horrors of America—its brashness, music at meals, and racial hysteria—by being emphasized there to a degree not found in other countries, force the onlooker into a rejection of the world which might otherwise come too late. As Auden puts it, 'the anonymous countryside littered with heterogeneous *dreck* and the synonymous cities besotted with electric signs . . . without which, perhaps, the analyst and the immigrant alike would never understand by contrast the nature of the Good Place nor desire it with sufficient desperation to stand a chance of arriving'.

Miller, in his *Air-Conditioned Nightmare*, writes with more desperation: 'In the ten thousand miles I have travelled I have come across two cities which have each of them a little section worth a second look—I mean Charleston and New Orleans. As for the other cities, towns and villages through which I passed I hope never to see them again. Everything that was of beauty, significance or promise has been destroyed or buried in the avalanche of false progress. We have degenerated; we have degraded the life which we sought to establish on this continent. . . Nowhere have I encountered such a dull, monotonous fabric of life as here in America. Here boredom reaches its peak.'

Well, maybe it does, perhaps Americans have destroyed their romantic wilderness on a grander scale than our own rodent attrition at the beauties of our countryside—but I feel a change is coming. As Europe becomes more helpless the Americans are compelled to become far-seeing and responsible, as Rome was forced by the long decline of Greece to produce an Augustus, a Vergil. *Our impotence liberates their potentialities*. Something important is about to happen, as if the wonderful *jeunesse* of America were suddenly to retain their idealism and vitality and courage and imagination into adult life, and become the wise and good who make use of them; the old dollar values are silently crumbling, and the self-criticism, experimental curiosity, sensibility and warmth which are so well represented, I feel, in this number, are on their way in. For Americans change very fast. 'Do they?' 'Very fast and all at once,' he said, 'and nothing ever changes them back.'

PART I

THE PROBLEM DEFINED

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS
AN AMERICAN

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

W. H. AUDEN recently remarked in a piece on Henry James (HORIZON, No. 86) that though the lot of the writer in the United States is a hard one, the possibilities of individual genius are all the greater. For while the young writer has generally been handicapped by the lack of a supporting tradition, our primary figures, like Poe, Melville, and James, have actually profited by the freedom from traditional shackles. Coming from a person like Auden, the only writer of stature, so far as I can recall, who has reversed the literary migration to Europe, this observation on American literary life is extremely relevant. But the trouble with Auden's approach (which, I suspect, stems partly from the fact that Auden himself, having already absorbed his tradition, is now more concerned with breaking new ground), is that it tends to slur over the enormous destruction and warping of talent in the struggle for literary survival. The price of genius has been the wasting of talent; and even if one chose to pay this price, the results are by no means guaranteed, especially since in recent times what goes by the name of genius has been steadily deteriorating. Hence the real question facing us is how long a culture can continue to exist on the basis of its exceptions.

To present another foreign view, I should like to quote a remark made in conversation by a German writer, a woman who for years was forced to keep one step ahead of the Nazis and is now living in this country. What she said was that it was much easier for a writer to starve in the United States, the richest nation in the world, than anywhere in Western Europe. Now while her statement is literally untrue, it does illuminate in a negative way our literary life. Literally, precisely the opposite is true: that is, it is almost impossible for a writer to starve here, since easy money is perpetually dangled before anyone with any

talent. And all one has to do is to make the proper adjustment, which may be conscious or unconscious, or it may take the form of a permanent conflict resulting from an uneasy compromise. What we can say, however—and this is the point of the remark I quoted—is that in the sense that it is difficult to starve, it is difficult to be the kind of writer who might starve. For the impulse to be seriously creative has been mostly channelized into more traditional and acceptable forms. However disturbing it may be to face the facts, it must be said that very few contemporary writers have been wholly untouched by the influence of the middlebrow. Nor is this surprising when one considers that the cultural situation, instead of working for the writer as it has in all truly creative periods, has actually been working against him, with the result that talent and intelligence are no longer enough to carry the literary man. More than ever before, it has been demanded of him that he also possess a rock-bound character. Needless to say the requisite of a strong character is a serious restriction on literature: which would help explain not only the many defections from serious writing but also the large number of intellectual cranks in this country among those who remain within the genre of integrity, since intelligence is not always accompanied by character and vice versa.

That the United States is a merchant's paradise, where the price of everything including culture is high, and the human cost higher, is by now a platitude—which means it is a phenomenon that is well known and badly understood. This is, of course, not unnatural in a period in which the critical intelligence is forced to fight rearguard actions, and polemics against the prevailing backwardness in both literature and politics tend to get bogged down themselves in platitudes. But it does make writing about the American scene all the more difficult—as I discovered in disputes with visiting French writers who found both the hope and the secret of American art in those slobbering he-men of Americana like Steinbeck, Hammet, and Caldwell, for the attempt to explain the real situation here rarely got beyond the usual clichés about commercialism and its middlebrow factories. Another difficulty in writing about the home front is that one tends to present what is often called a *pessimistic* view—though it might be noted in passing that the charge of pessimism is usually made by people who are looking for some substitute in adult

life for the Sunday Schools of their childhood. Perhaps some kind of sociological book-keeping would show carefully balanced columns of black and red; unfortunately our own involvement in the fate of American art leads us to communicate a sense of the dilemmas and the frustrations and the pathos of intellectual life in this country. Besides, who knows how much of a feeling of belonging and pride lies behind all our effort at criticism and detachment?

The broadest and seemingly most objective descriptions of American life and letters are at the same time full of generalities that either go too far or do not go far enough. Thus, as every enlightened person knows, the essence of our civilization is to be found in its rampant commercialism, its addiction to things, its mass distribution of culture C.O.D., its populist *élan* which makes a cult of the half-baked, its backwardness which is institutionalized in the name of popular education, and, on the more positive side, in our enormous vitality, inventiveness, empirical habits of mind, and a genuine, almost organic, love of freedom. And one could go further in tracing the national existence to such historical events as the early rolling back of the frontier and the headlong industrialization of the last century. But no matter how complete one makes the sociological picture, it still fails to tell the story of our intellectual life. If that story is to be told, or even suggested, I think it must be through some concrete and unsystematic observations on the effects of our culture on the creative mind today.

The idea, for example, that we lack a literary tradition is a common one, having been noted by Constance Rourke, Van Wyck Brooks, and many others, and going as far back as Emerson. But, like many other such observations, it is an abstraction that has to be broken down. For one thing, we do have the illusion of a tradition made up of our literary monuments, from Hawthorne to Hemingway or Faulkner, and European critics have sometimes taken this sequence of great writers as their image of American literature. From a more creative point of view, however, we actually have two traditions, one anti-traditional, the other struggling to forge a tradition. And over both hovers the spectre of our national experience, which is too easily captured by the former and too easily lost by the latter. The anti-traditional is a vein running through such writers as Whitman, Mark Twain, Sandburg, Dreiser, Steinbeck, and it has its source in the native myth of the common man—the little man in a vast country—

who re-enacts the life of the early frontiersman in his physical self-assertion, in his communal ego, and in the fact that his pathos emerges in time and space. This is a myth, of course, that has become deeply entrenched in political reality and in our whole way of life, and may be seen in such different phenomena as the Gettysburg address, Charlie Chaplin, William Jennings Bryan, Brook Farm, and the model-T Ford. And it is a myth that provides a simple, ready-made version of the national experience. On the other side, however, we have the effort of such internationalists as Emerson, Hawthorne, James, and the *avant-garde* writers of the modern period, to create a more stable, *élite*, intellectual tradition, connecting itself with the movements of European art and thought. If these efforts have not always been successful or continuous, sometimes appearing as a lunge into the European tradition, sometimes petering out, either by adopting a cult of the bohemian or by being re-absorbed into the native strain, I believe it is because we have not evolved a sense of our national experience that can sustain the modern creative mind. Perhaps the most tragic example in recent times of this dilemma of the American writer is F. Scott Fitzgerald, who came close to a version of American experience in terms of a truly modern consciousness, only to find himself succumbing to the more popular myths and finally cracking under the burden. Our predicament lies in the fact that most writers who are immersed in the American experience have a provincial sensibility, while the *avant-garde* lacks the sense of nativity.

Our cultural situation is brought most clearly into focus when we are confronted by visiting European writers, who think of the United States as a nation of quaint supermen, creating a literature full of violent experience and cosmic heart-throbs. No wonder they regard John Steinbeck as the Babe Ruth of American fiction. (I exempt English writers who have no pet illusions on this score; perhaps because of their Oedipal relation to us they know that Steinbeck is not their son.) Yet in attempting to acquaint them with the true state of American writing one hardly knows where to begin, with the result that one shuttles between a representative picture and an analysis of the creative lines of force. Where England or France, for example, have some central traditions to which most of their writers are related, the United States has thrown up a vast variety of talents who are connected

or divided by currents not visible to the naked eye: and rarely does any single figure represent some larger school. Thus a survey would have to include Hemingway, Faulkner, Katherine Anne Porter, Dreiser, and Anderson in fiction, and an even longer list in poetry and criticism, to which must be added any number of younger talents. And then we are asked to place Lewis, Gertrude Stein, Robinson Jeffers, Thomas Wolfe, Henry Miller, Richard Wright, among countless others. One result of this dispersion is that criticism of the American scene has been sociologically inclusive as in Dreiser or Parrington, aesthetically exclusive as in Wallace Stevens or the formal critics, or just generally plaintive. Even more important, however, is the effect on the young talent who must spend himself in a search for his own bearings, only to find himself alienated not merely from life but from literature as well. If he has sufficient character and genius, we get a Melville or an Eliot. If not—well, that is why this country has an excess of talented cranks, writers of perpetual promise and the Screen Writers' Guild.

It is largely the pressure of the populist myth that prevents the development of a more or less stable *élite*, which in turn would create a profounder version of the national experience. (By an *élite*, I do not mean any kind of social aristocracy: I merely have in mind a fluid body of intellectuals, such as has always existed in Europe since the Renaissance, whose accepted role in society is to perpetuate traditional ideas and values and to create new ones.) Culturally, what we have is a kind of democratic free-for-all, in which every individual, being as good as every other one, has the right to question any form of intellectual authority. In practice, however, this variety of cultural democracy can be defined as the zealously guarded privilege of agreeing with one's neighbour. How else explain the best-seller market which invariably hits a common denominator of taste? The reason, it seems to me, for this apparent contradiction, is that the middle-class mind, which dominates the production of cultural commodities in this country, operates through the myth of intellectual *laissez-faire*. In this way both reader and writer, while being apparently permitted the latitude of their individualism, are actually regimented into the vast army of the middlebrow. Needless to say, the effect on the writer is most insidious, for the literary product of this process has an uncanny resemblance to serious art. When such magazines as *Time* and the *New Yorker* reach out for fresh talent, when *Harper's*

Bazaar will print the same story as *Partisan Review*, what we have is at once a general raising and lowering of the level, for with the blurring of distinctions new writing tends to become more and more serious and intellectually acceptable, and less and less bold and extreme. The typical first novel of recent years has generally been a more sensitive version of the popular banalities; and it is perhaps not an accident that most of them have been composed under the inspiration of what is known as the feminine sensibility.

In so far as art in this country tends to seek its own level, it usually runs into populism and regionalism, which in a broad sense are related phenomena. Populism might be defined as the pathos of the unconscious little man without a home; regionalism provides him with a home. In both cases, as can be seen in the work of such figures as Steinbeck or Caldwell, the typical hero is reduced to a state of almost animal suffering and carries on an incestuous relation with his own feelings, remaining wholly outside those larger currents and tensions that determine the fate of humanity. Even so gifted a writer as Faulkner, whose fiction reaches deep into the cultural coils of the South, has been limited and turned inward, one feels, by the restriction of his theme. And when Hemingway tried to encompass states of mind beyond the more primitive being of his earlier work, he relapsed into the conventional attitudes of popular realism.

Lacking, then, a cultural base for the free rein of individual talent within a given tradition, the young writer is impelled toward a variety of self-defeating attitudes. Should he resist the temptations of conformity, he might for a short time go the whole hog to bohemianism. But here he faces the abyss of self-indulgence, far from any centres of common experience, since bohemianism passed out with the 'thirties when the vulgar Stalinist notion of social responsibility in art was conveniently married to the smug progressivism of the middlebrow mind. What is left: —the cult of the creative, and academicism, two trends that enjoy a great vogue in the United States. The cult of the creative expresses itself in a hostility to Europe, to ideas, and to the city, and, dedicated to a female version of the sensibility which it is in dread of having raped by urban intellectuals, it puts a premium on literary décor, on sensitiveness, and on delicate perception. As might be expected, its content, as for example in the stories of Eudora Welty, is limited largely to the quaint, the childlike, and

the ever-so-minutely warped. As for academicism it is a custom-made version of the modern. Serious, intelligent, addicted to the forms and standards of the past, all it lacks is a sense of new and vital experience. Thus our literary journals are full of stories and poems that are formally up to date but subsist on the sensibility of T. S. Eliot or Ezra Pound.

It is perhaps on literary criticism, however, that the academic mind has taken the greatest hold. This is not surprising when one considers that criticism is by nature most susceptible to the wiles of the academy. Over and above this, however, the critical mind in this country has largely become grooved in a highly formal tradition, devoted to textual analysis that begs the question of values, and based on an aesthetic derived from a very special tradition in poetry running through Hopkins, Yeats, and T. S. Eliot. The two most notable exceptions are Van Wyck Brooks, who has lately confused the American flag with American literature, and Edmund Wilson, whose journalistic gifts and social interests have kept him from being sucked into the academic stream. Most of the others have become dissociated from the main currents of modern experience, the most extreme example of the type being Kenneth Burke, who has taken to constructing vast systems of elaborate irrelevancies. What we have here is a most tragic waste of talent, for I am convinced that a greater discipline and innate literary intelligence has gone into American literary criticism than perhaps anywhere else today. Once again it might be said that the trouble lies in the lack of a tradition, in this case both critical and creative. In the past the fertility of the critical mind has always come from the fact that the critical and the creative have been different aspects of the same impulse. Today, however, the two have been divorced, with the result that criticism has been forced back into itself, playing hide-and-seek with the principles of its own existence. And even among the bolder, non-academic spirits, the problem has been that of a tradition too. For while the empiricism of the American temper has served to bring politics, psychology, and philosophy into the arena of critical thinking, we still do not have a stable terminology or a set of norms that can be assumed in any given critical work. Hence the critical level is high, but the tone is often uncertain and the prose tortured, as the writer strains to fuse the traditional language of the sensibility with the findings of other intellectual disciplines.

In these random observations, unified only, I am afraid, by a *sense* of our entire culture, I have tried to give a kind of existential view of the literary situation in this country. I call it existential, perhaps euphemistically, because it is enormously difficult to sort out and define all those aspects of our literature that actually present themselves to the mind all at once, like the facets of one's own being or one's experience of the world outside. And, in a sense, being a writer in America is a special kind of experience that cannot be entirely grasped in terms of the history of European literature. Our middlebrow art, for example, is not simply European *kitsch* put into mass production. It has become the normal form of art, relegating what is characterized as 'highbrow' art to the realm of the neurotic. (Highbrow art is still condoned as a luxury product, but that is mainly because we regard neuroses along with private yachts and racing stables, as interesting luxuries.) Hence I would have liked to say something about our media of 'popular culture', like Hollywood and the radio and the mass-magazines, which for all their obvious debasements have had an effect on many of our values and habits of mind. Unfortunately, we have usually not been conscious of the influence: nevertheless, to take only one instance, most intellectuals have been able to lose themselves in the movies, as though in the darkness of the movie house they participated in some tribal rite binding them to the rest of the community.

In the past, our own creative energy has been nourished by new literary movements in Europe. Today, however, an impoverished and politically tottering Europe is not only dependent on the economic resources of the United States but is also, apparently, more receptive than ever before to its cultural advances. The historical irony in this dual role of the United States is merely an extension of the contradiction at the heart of our civilization. For, on the one hand, our economic power and the democratic myths behind our institutions are all that stand in the path of a Stalinist enslavement of Europe. On the other hand, the United States might well become the greatest exporter of *kitsch* the world has ever seen. Not being art fetishists, most of us are willing to accept the cultural risks involved in preserving European political freedom. If, however, America is to be looked to, as do some of our European friends, as a source of literary salvation, then all I can say is—God Save the King.

THE PRESENT PROSPECTS OF AMERICAN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

CLEMENT GREENBERG

THE American artist with any pretensions to total seriousness suffers still from his dependency upon what the School of Paris, Klee, Kandinsky and Mondrian accumulated before 1935. Hardly anywhere around him does he find, in either décor or activity, impulses strong enough to send him further. The three, four or five best artists in this country yearn back to Paris as it was, almost, in 1921, and live partly by time transfusions. Not that they do not reflect the present period—they would not count if they did not—but they cannot consult the present for any standard of quality and style: all excellence seems to flow still from that vivacious, unbelievable near past which lasted from 1905 until 1930 and which not even the First World War, but only Hitler, could definitely terminate.

American culture has in any case seldom fed our painters and sculptors as it has our novelists and poets. We have had painters in this country, and some of them—Allston, Cole, Homer, Eakins, Ryder, Blakelock, Newman, Whistler—accomplished more than a little; yet they could in the end distinguish themselves only by a heightening or idiosyncratic twisting of ideas imported from Europe, and could never create or re-create a new vision that the rest of the world had to take account of and on which artists coming after could nourish themselves substantially. Washington Allston played a variation on the Baroque landscape; Cole inflected it in another way; Eakins got something more out of that last dramatic chiaroscuro derivable from French painting before Courbet; and Ryder worked from the Barbizon School and Monticelli without breaking out of the frame of academic art. John Sloan, George Bellows, William Glackens, Maurice Prendergast, and Arnold Friedman (a contemporary of theirs who came to fruition thirty years later) managed, along with John Marin, what is still the most considerable effort of American art in the twentieth century, yet

they simply extended and refined various phases of French Impressionism without—except perhaps in Friedman's and Marin's cases—driving them towards the future. Winslow Homer, in small part, and John Kensett of the later Hudson River School, in even smaller, anticipated Europe—that is, the bright *à-plat* colour of early Impressionism—by five or ten years. But Homer, with nothing to answer or echo him in the America of his time, could found a school on his gift only when he had thinned it down, toward the end of his life, in water colour; while Kensett was a mere picturesque flash in the pan (still under-rated, however).

The situation is no longer what it was, but I hardly know whether the gains have or have not cancelled out most of the losses American culture in general has sustained since 1918. America, in two or three big cities, is being rapidly divested of its provincialism, but the cosmopolitanism replacing it is the product of a levelling out and rationalization of culture, which we now import or imitate the way we do French wines and British cloth. The cultured American has now become more knowing than cultivated, glib in a kind of fashionable *koiné* but without eccentricity or the distortions of personal bias, a compendium of what he or (more usually) she reads in certain knowing magazines—anxious to be right, correct, *au courant*, rather than wise and happy.

He or she may have a minimal judgement in literature but hardly any in art. It is merely the stumbling ability to read the language of paint that the American artist asks for and so sadly fails to find. In our advanced circles there is an amazing disjunction between literature and art. Delacroix wrote to Baudelaire: ' . . . bien des gens . . . regardent un tableau comme les Anglais regardent une contrée quand ils voyagent'. In this country ninety-nine—not eighty-five—per cent of the art world itself is composed of tourists, some of them permanently in pension no doubt, but tourists for all that, flashing the stickers on their bags and always on the point of leaving for the equivalent of Mexico or of having just returned from there. The discussion of American art, even in the most exalted circles, is a kind of travelogue patter—this is what fills the three or four art magazines that live an endowed existence in New York and whose copy is supplied by permanent college girls, male and female.

It might be thought that in a country like ours, where pictorial communication, as in the movies, comics, and tabloids, has encroached so much on the printed word, even for very literate people, and where industrialism insists more and more on the graphic—it might be thought that in such a country painting even at its remotest from mass taste would receive some stimulus from the sheer overflow of pictorial consumption. Certainly a kind of vulgarized modern art derived from Impressionism and its immediate aftermath has penetrated *Life* magazine, the calendars and advertisements. But all this has had but the same effect as the invasion of the *New Yorker* and *Harper's Bazaar* by *ex-avant-garde* literature. Art has become another way of educating the new middle class that springs up in industrial America in the wake of every important war and whose cash demands enforce a general levelling out of culture that, in raising the lowest standards of consumption, brings the highest down to meet them. For education always means a certain number of concessions.

In any case the very improvement of general middle-brow taste constitutes in itself a danger. Whereas high art used to remain untempted, simply because it had no chance whatsoever of complying with the market demand, today the new mass cultural market created by industrialism is seducing writers and artists into rationalizing and packaging for mass distribution even the most pretentious products.

Taken on other terms, however, the American effort at mass culture—not, let me emphasize, mass education, which has already been accomplished—is an unparalleled venture, one not to be sneered at. Culture means *cultivation*. Only the enormous productivity of American industrialism could have led any society to think it possible to cultivate the *masses*. Given our ethos, given our public education, given the fact that nine out of ten Americans know how to use water closets and automobiles—that is, already have culture in the Soviet Russian sense—given all this, as made possible by our productivity, it was to be expected that sooner or later the American ‘common man’ would aspire to self-cultivation as something that belonged inevitably to a high standard of living as personal hygiene. In any event the bitter status struggle that goes on in a thoroughly democratic country would of itself have served by now to put self-cultivation on the order of the day—once it became clear, to the commonalty,

as it has by now, that cultivation not only makes one's life more interesting but—even more important in a society that is becoming more and more closed—defines social position. Whether it succeeds or not, the very fact of this experiment in mass cultivation makes us in several respects the most historically advanced country on earth.

Yet high culture, which in the civilized past has always functioned on the basis of sharp class distinctions, is endangered—at least for the time being—by this sweeping process which, by wiping out the social distinctions between the more and the less cultivated, renders standards of art and thought provisional. In his effort to keep a step ahead of a pedagogic vulgarization that infects everything, and in his endeavour to locate the constantly shifting true centre of seriousness, the ambitious American writer and artist must from moment to moment improvise both career and art. It becomes increasingly difficult to tell who is serious and who not. At the same time that the average college graduate becomes more literate the average intellectual becomes more banal, both in personal life and professional activity.

There is also the fact that a society as completely capitalized and industrialized as our American one, seeks relentlessly to organize every possible field of activity and consumption in the direction of profit, regardless of whatever immunity from commercialization any particular activity may have once enjoyed.

It is this kind of rationalization that has made life more and more boring and tasteless in our country, particularly since 1940, flattening and emptying all those vessels which are supposed to nourish us daily. Our difficulty in acknowledging and stating the dull horror of our lives has helped prevent the proper and energetic development of American art in the last two decades and more. The emptiness of our American life is not something to be declaimed about or expressed as such. What has to be recognized are the circumstances in which such emptiness becomes the common fate. These, endemic to bourgeois industrialism, were already recognized, among painters, by the French Impressionists; and if their outlook, as that of most Parisian art up to 1925, was not dark, it was because industrialism—and history—still permitted the individual a little confidence in his own private solution, a modicum of space in which personal detachment could survive and work up its own proper interestingness. Standing off

in the preserves of Bohemia, the Impressionists, Fauvists and Cubists could still indulge in a contemplation that was as sincere and bold as it was largely unconscious; and the soberness of their art, a soberness indispensable to all the very greatest painting, from Ajanta to Paris, stemmed from this automatic contemplation.

The Impressionists and those who came after them in France put themselves in accord with the situation by implicitly accepting its materialism—the fact, that is, that modern life can be radically confronted, understood and dealt with only in material terms. What matters is not what one believes but what happens to one. From now on you had nothing to go on but your states of mind and your naked sensations, of which structural, but not religious, metaphysical or historico-philosophical, interpretations were alone permissible. It is its materialism, or positivism, presented more explicitly than in literature or music, that made painting the most advanced and *hopeful* art in the West between 1860 and 1914.

The dominant creative tradition in America during the last century and a half, as in England and Germany, has, however, been Gothic, transcendental, romantic, subjective. Industrialism exacerbates and drives us to extreme positions where we write poetry but are unable to calm ourselves and live long enough to fix abiding plastic representations. The School of Paris rested on a sufficient acceptance of the world as it must be, and it delighted in the world's very disenchantment, seeing it as evidence of man's triumph over it. We, confronted more immediately by the paraphernalia of industrialism, see the situation as too overwhelming to come to terms with, and look for an escape in transcendent exceptions and aberrated states. True, it was a Frenchman who eminently taught the modern world this way out—but one suspects that one of the reasons for which Rimbaud abandoned his own path was the realization that it was an evasion, not a solution, and already on the point of becoming, in the profoundest sense, academic.

It is only by one of those inevitable confusions prompted by uneven cultural development that the aberrated and deranged could have become so intimately involved with modern art. Cubism and Impressionism have nothing to do with them, nor has Matisse. The great modern painters and sculptors are the

hard-headed ones—or at least they are great only as long as they remain hard-headed: Cézanne, his paranoia notwithstanding; Bonnard; Picasso, as long as he was a Cubist; Gris; Léger; Miro; Brancusi; Kandinsky, before he discovered the Spiritual; Lipchitz, before he re-discovered the Mythological. Here, as in all great periods of art, scepticism and matter-of-factness take charge of everything in the end, even as they did for the architects of the Gothic cathedrals.

A temporary solution for the latest American painting has been Klee, the one original modern painter whose nominal inspiration was the 'mystical', fantastical, transcendental-subjective—the one twentieth-century artist, moreover, who was able to assimilate the School of Paris and still stay apart from it without suffering harm (unlike Kandinsky). Klee was a genius and he founded a school, but he was not a big genius, remarkable as he was, and his influence has been viable precisely because it could not occupy for its exclusive use all of the new territory it opened up. Klee could go as far as he did because he was capable of a detached irony toward himself as well as toward the world (in any case the mysticism attributed to him seems more and more a fiction of the critics). But his American disciples, however worthy, are less capable of detachment and irony than of almost anything else; therefore they are incapable of varying and extending themselves and they have all remained minor artists in a way Klee never was.

The two most original American painters today, in the sense of being the most uniquely and differentiatedly American, are Morris Graves and Mark Tobey, both products of the Klee school, both somewhat under the influence of Oriental art, as Klee himself was, and both from Seattle in the Northwest. But since they have finished stating their personalities, Graves and Tobey have turned out to be so narrow as to cease even being interesting. Sensibility confined, intensified, and repeated this way has been a staple of American art and literature since Emily Dickinson; but it has also been an evasion, even in the person of such a wonderful poet as Marianne Moore. The art that results does not show us enough of ourselves and of the kind of life we live in our cities, and therefore does not release enough of our feeling.

In painting today such an urban art can be derived only from Cubism. Significantly and peculiarly, the most powerful painter

in contemporary America and the only one who promises to be a major one is a Gothic, morbid and extreme disciple of Picasso's Cubism and Miro's post-Cubism, tintured also with Kandinsky and Surrealist inspiration. His name is Jackson Pollock, and if the aspect of his art is not as originally and uniquely local as that of Graves' and Tobey's, the feeling it contains is perhaps even more radically American. Faulkner and Melville can be called in as witnesses to the nativeness of such violence, exasperation and stridency. Pollock's strength lies in the emphatic surfaces of his pictures, which it is his concern to maintain and intensify in all that thick, fuliginous flatness which began—but only began—to be the strong point of late Cubism. Of no profound originality as a colourist, Pollock draws massively, laying on paint directly from the tube, and handles black, white and grey as they have not been handled since Gris' middle period. No other abstract painter since Cubism has been so well able to retain classical chiaroscuro.

For all its Gothic quality, Pollock's art is still an attempt to cope with urban life; it dwells entirely in the lonely jungle of immediate sensations, impulses and notions, therefore is positivist, concrete. Yet its Gothic-ness, its paranoia and resentment narrow it; large though it may be in ambition—large enough to contain inconsistencies, ugliness, blind spots and monotonous passages—it nevertheless lacks breadth.

David Smith, a sculptor and kind of constructivist, is several years older than Pollock and more fully realized. He is the only other American artist of our time who produces an art capable of withstanding the test of international scrutiny and which, like Pollock's, might justify the term major. Like Brancusi, Arp, Lipchitz, Giacometti, Gonzales, Pevsner, Smith derives from painting much more than he does from what we usually know as the tradition of sculpture: his art being linear, open, pictorial, rather than monolithic. Identified by its materials and methods—steel, alloys, the blowtorch—with industrial procedures, this art also reflects American industrialism and engineering by its denial of weight and mass and its emphasis on direction and trajectory rather than locus. If Pollock is Gothic, Smith revolves between the Baroque and Cubist classicism; a wide-open temperament supplies substance and invention that require for their ordering a Cubist sense of style. Smith's periodic lapses from excellence

come when the Baroque gets the upper hand, yet these lapses are essential, so to speak, to his art, for they provide the raw material for the successes. Smith's art is more enlightened, optimistic and broader than Pollock's, and makes up for its lesser force by a virile elegance that is without example in a country where elegance is otherwise obtained only by femininity or by the wistful, playful, derivative kind of decorativeness we see in such artists as the sculptor-constructor Alexander Calder and the painter Stuart Davis, both of whom have great taste but little force.

The presence of two artists like Smith and Pollock, both products of a completed assimilation of French art, relieves us somewhat of the necessity of being apologetic about American art. But they are far from being enough. The art of no country can live and perpetuate itself exclusively on spasmodic feeling, high spirits and the infinite subdivision of sensibility. A substantial art requires balance and enough thought to put it in accord with the most advanced view of the world obtaining at the time. Modern man has *in theory* solved the great public and private questions, and the fact that he has not solved them in practice and that actuality has become more problematical than ever in our day ought not to prevent, in this country, the development of a bland, large, balanced, Apollonian art in which passion does not fill in the gaps left by the faulty or omitted application of theory but takes off from where the most advanced theory stops, and in which an intense detachment informs all. Only such an art, resting on rationality but without permitting itself to be rationalized, can adequately answer contemporary life, found our sensibilities, and, by containing and vicariously relieving them, remunerate us for those particular and necessary frustrations that ensue from living at the present moment in the history of western civilization.

What did Nietzsche say? He knew in spite of his profession of the Dionysian: 'Zukünftiges.—Gegen die Romantik der grossen "Passion".—Zu begreifen, wie zu jedem "klassischen" Geschmack ein Quantum Kälte, Luzidität, Härte hinzugehört: Logik vor allem, Glück in der Geistigkeit, "drei Einheiten", Konzentration, Hass gegen Gefühl, Gemüt, *esprit*, Hass gegen das Vielfache, Unsichere, Schweifende, Ahnende so gut als gegen das Kurze, Spitze, Hübsche, Gütige. . . .' Balance, largeness, precision,

enlightenment, contempt for nature in all its particularity—that is the great and absent art of our age.

The task facing culture in America is to create a *milieu* that will produce such an art—and literature—and free us (at last!) from the obsession with extreme situations and states of mind. We have had enough of the wild artist—he has by now been converted into one of the standard self-protective myths of our society: if art is wild it must be irrelevant. We stand in need of a much greater infusion of consciousness than heretofore into what we call the creative. We need men of the world not too much amazed by experience, not too much at loss in the face of current events, not at all overpowered by their own feelings, men to some extent aware of what has been felt elsewhere since the beginning of recorded history.

As it happens, and for reasons not too difficult to expound, painting and sculpture have been in the twentieth century those of all the arts most intimate with Bohemian life, and therefore most sensitive to its passing fits and spasms. Bohemia has been able to influence painting and sculpture with an immediacy unthinkable in literature or music.

The purchase taken by international Bohemia on these arts in New York since 1940 has served to counteract the influence of artiness on the one hand and of the Whitmanesque blowhards on the other; but it has also reduced the climate of American art to an even more neutral temperature, since international Bohemia has not asked anything really positive of it and has merely imposed upon it the rule of its own banal good taste, which is superior to what we had before only in being less provincial.

The Museum of Modern Art, which fifteen years ago replaced Alfred Stieglitz as the principal impresario of modern art in America, is the chief exponent of this new good taste, substituting for Stieglitz's messianism a *chicté* that in the long run is almost an equal liability. Pusillanimity makes the Museum follow the lead of the most powerful art dealers; only once in a while will it show or buy an artist lacking 57th Street's imprimatur. But it cannot be blamed too much, since it reflects rather accurately the prevailing taste in American art circles.

In any case the fate of American art does not depend on the encouragement bestowed or withheld by 57th Street and the

Museum of Modern Art. The morale of that section of New York's Bohemia which is inhabited by striving young artists has declined in the last twenty years, but the level of its intelligence has risen, and it is still downtown, below 34th Street, that the fate of American art is being decided—by young people, few of them over forty, who live in cold-water flats and exist from hand to mouth. Now they all paint in the abstract vein, show rarely on 57th Street, and have no reputations that extend beyond a small circle of fanatics, art-fixated misfits who are as isolated in the United States as if they were living in Paleolithic Europe.

Most of the young artists in question have either been students of Hans Hofmann or come in close contact with his students and ideas. Originally from Munich and himself a painter, Hofmann lived in Paris for a time and felt the point of School of Paris painting as only an outsider could—and as no one else in our time has. Hofmann will in the future, when the accomplishment of American painting in the last five and the next twenty years is properly evaluated, be considered the most important figure in American art of the period since 1935 and one of the most influential forces in its entire history, not for his own work, but for the influence, enlightening and uncompromising, he exerts. Hofmann's approach, in spite of himself and his own verbalizations, is essentially a positivist, immediate one that insists on a radical discrimination between what is pertinent and permanent in the art of our times and what is merely interesting, curious or sensational. Like the best literature, the best visual art of our time is that which comes closest to non-fiction, has least to do with illusions, and at the same time maintains and asserts itself exclusively as art. Hofmann is not at home in English and his terminology, no less than his private and irrelevant preoccupation with the 'spiritual', may mislead one at first, but those who spend time with him and watch his taste operate are soon disabused: this is the core of the artistic sensibility and intelligence of our age. Hofmann's presence in New York has served to raise up a climate of taste among at least fifty people in America that cannot be matched for rigour and correctness in Paris or London. No matter how puzzling and ugly the new and original will appear—and it will indeed appear so—the people who inhabit this climate will not fail to perceive and hail it.

So far, however, all this has not received commensurate

expression in works of art themselves. The tentatives are promising, seven or eight people make them; but still, aside from Jackson Pollock, nothing has really been accomplished as yet. The difficulty remains our failure to relate this high conception of contemporary art to our own lives, our inability to be detached about either art or life, detached and whole as people are who are at home in the world of culture. What we have instead is the ferocious struggle to be a genius, which involves the artists downtown even more than the others. The foreseeable result will be a collection of *peintres maudits*—who are already replacing the *poètes maudits* in Greenwich Village. Alas, the future of American art depends on them. That it should is fitting but sad. Their isolation is inconceivable, crushing, unbroken, damning. That anyone can produce art on a respectable level in this situation is highly improbable. What can fifty do against a hundred and forty million?

NOTES ON BEING AN AMERICAN

WILLIAM BARRETT

'It is a difficult thing to be an American,' said Archibald MacLeish, somewhere around 1929 if I remember rightly, a good while before he had discovered how easy it is to be an Under-Secretary of State. The American who tries to grasp his nationality is inevitably thrown into a peculiarly personal venture: part of the meaning of this nationality seems to be that each American, if he puts the question at all, has to explore his own personal relation to the American fate. This is not the case for the young Frenchman, even now when the French tradition seems to stand at a moment of strange crisis in France; his tradition is there, known and articulated, and he may place himself in one or other direct relation to it, even that of violent rejection. And I imagine this is also true, though to a lesser degree, for the young Englishman. But the American confronts something much more indefinite and amorphous; something which exists, certainly, otherwise how should he be so persistently haunted by its challenges and opportunities; but which, just as certainly, is not yet defined, and to that extent does not yet quite exist but has to be made, and so

may never be brought to exist at all; so that the American imagination, otherwise so young and innocent, has been persistently haunted by these darker shadows of possible failure, extravagant waste, final abortiveness.

This is my excuse for the personal character of these notes. If I put the question to myself 'What it means to be an American', I can think off-hand of five or six different answers that would have to be made by various persons I know; and I am therefore forced to seek my own; and if I tried to abstract altogether from the personal, the question would become much too general and academic for me, requiring a profound scholarship in American literature that I do not possess, so that I could hardly face its answer with any degree of excitement or conviction. But however personal these notes, I hope I am speaking not merely for myself, but for a real group in American life; perhaps, in some parts of what I shall say, a group more numerous than I imagine, though as yet largely inarticulate; and if, so far as it is articulate, this group is very small and in constant danger of being submerged under the more violent currents of American life, it may nevertheless become one of the most important in America; which may be saying no more than that I have already identified my own fortunes with it.

I. RE-DISCOVERY OF AMERICA

This was not a discovery that I could have personally contrived: I should not like to fake another one of those faked 're-discoveries' of America that fed the nationalist appetite during the last ten years; this was the shock of recognition forced upon thousands of other Americans: nothing less than the return from abroad at the end of the war. We shall none of us ever be the same again—let us hope. I see it, however, from the purely personal perspective of one tiny incident that set the frame for my return.

The plane bringing me (and some twenty other slightly war-weary Americans) back from Naples was grounded by bad weather at Tunis; there was the problem of killing time for that day; the seedy, mud-stained city seemed to offer nothing, so I borrowed a car and drove out to the ancient site of Carthage.

But this was the end of the war for me, and so full of the reverberations of that departing thunder, that I had better prepare the scene a little. . . .

It was during the war, 4,000 miles from home, that I really

began to discover America. Strange that the spectacle of the American G.I. roaming battered Europe should have awakened the memory of Henry James! But it did, and what I saw was the old Jamesian contrast between American innocence and European worldliness; no matter that innocence does not mean goodness, and that many, far too many, of these soldiers, in moments of drunken exigency, or through the temporary dissolution of character from homesickness amid this foreign corruption, traded on the black market ('They have to get drunk', one Italian remarked to me, 'because they are afraid to make love'); and no matter that a great many of them were first, second or third generation immigrants: something vague, but very real, called the American character, had set its mark upon them; made them taller, broader, reshaped their once-European faces, left them more boisterous, violent, insensitive; but also more open and less cunning—and possibly therefore less intelligent. It was quite a jolt for me to be saluted in certain foreign circles as being 'so American'; and though I knew the people who said this could not see the way in which I may, or may not, differ from a Mid-western farmboy, nevertheless I had to recognize that they were, in fact, perceiving some common characteristic that united all of us, the new and quite un-Jamesian ambassadors roaming Europe.

Anyone who has grown up in New York without very much money will have experienced a neighbourhood where one was still labelled by the nationality of one's immigrant forebears, and consequently thought of oneself in such terms before thinking that one was particularly American. We would naturally say of this or that boy: 'He is Italian, or Polish, or Irish; or, more simply, he is a Jew'—as if our young minds already grasped that the destiny and virtue of the Jew is to be an international figure. We were all American, of course; at school we sang 'America!' at General Assembly; but being an American was something that came after one's other nationality, still to be acquired and learned as our parents or grandparents off the boat had had to learn and acquire it. Thus the suffering of my childhood was to be 'Irish' in an almost completely 'Italian' neighbourhood.

We also grew up during the debunking of America in the twenties. If we were too young to read Mencken's onslaughts, they must have been in the air, for when I first became conscious,

somewhere around 1929, the contempt for America as a barbarous country, and the exaltation of civilized Europe, was already a settled attitude, which most of my friends seemed to share as a matter of course.

Sooner or later, the expatriated sensibility had to come to an end. The expatriates had to come home, the Depression left them no money to live in Europe; and they were thrown back upon America, which, in the grip of its economic crisis, revealed such a ferment of poverty and social conflict that the literary imagination could look here for a new sustenance. The rise of Fascism was the beginning of the long European defeat that culminated in World War II and eliminated Europe as a permanent cultural recourse. But apart from any or all particular causes, the American writer had sooner or later to come to terms with America: Van Wyck Brooks and *The Seven Arts* had already understood this in 1915, when they announced the period of 'America's Coming of Age'. Brooks went on developing during the 'twenties and 'thirties until he had evolved his present brand of literary nationalism, which seems usable to nobody but landscape committees. Perhaps we were not aware how the tide was slowly turning until the first full flood of nationalism burst upon us with the war. We had not failed to notice, of course, how projects for American literary studies were becoming something of a racket; 'people of whom we thought very little were turning up with opulent grants to study Thomas Jefferson (the American Leonardo, or was that Samuel Morse?), the Adamses, and the rest of the sacred names. As the youthful intellectual proletariat of the Depression, we had learned to scoff at everything, and we naturally made jokes about this new trend; but what we had not yet faced up to was the problem of defining ourselves which this new literary nationalism had forced upon us.

Then the war was already upon us, and the experience of European Man reduced to his extreme situations. When we walked among the ruins and felt like weeping; and just because we walked among them and knew we were not chained to them, we also knew we were Americans: free from these ruins for that possibility of self-definition, which has always been the real historical meaning of 'the American character'.

Such was part of the load I carried with me up the hill toward Carthage the afternoon I paid my tourist's visit. . . .

There were no other visitors, and, wandering the ancient site, I seemed momentarily to have escaped America. The monk who showed me around was a pungent personality, a man of intelligence and spirit, and I wish I remembered his name to commemorate it here. Bearded and hook-nosed, he looked more Arab than French, and it amuses me to imagine him as a bastard scion of some noble son of the desert, that I may place his rather earthy person better against the brown African earth and the ancient bay, so tranquil that day that it looked like a stagnant pool.

But, showing a stele from the late period of Carthage, he had only to turn it over to make America reappear: the back was completely covered with the scrawls of American soldiers. This might have been a tile lifted from a public urinal somewhere in America: here were the familiar hieroglyphs of the public lavatory, scrawled hearts and arrows with the inscribed girlfriend, Midwestern names and Midwestern places. Where Roman and Arab had left not a stone standing, American pencils could not resist the compulsion to defile.

I stammered my dismay and apology. But it occurs to me now that he could easily have washed away those signatures. Perhaps the antiquarian's instinct restrained him from removing this deposit of another and new civilization, which might perplex archaeologists a thousand years from now to decipher.

The tombs of the ancient Carthaginians evoke Freud: long narrow tubes, just big enough for a man to penetrate, lead deep into a round chamber where the corpse was placed in a foetal position. From these tombs had been excavated pottery, figurines, imported art from Greece or Etruria. But the Carthaginians themselves seemed to fade away into the mystery of their tombs, eluding the speech of art.

'*Mais, mon père,*' I was puzzled, 'where is *l'art indigène* of the Carthaginians themselves?'

His eyes glittered: it was an opportunity he had been waiting for. '*Justement, ils n'en avaient pas.*' He began to snicker. 'They were not artists. They were commercial and business people. They were the Americans of antiquity.' And he gave a shout of laughter like a boy who has just played a practical joke. It was his revenge for those scrawls on the stele.

It was only the next day that his remark began to awaken reverberations as I sat dozing in the plane that fled westward over

the even ridges of clouds beneath which the distant ocean shone dully like a level paving. The remark in itself was nothing very much, neither very new nor altogether true, and one might have retorted, though not without irony, that the monk's countrymen in Europe were at that moment making a fetish of the American novel. It was the conjuncture of remark, site, and projected impatience of my return, that placed before me a new perspective: the vanished Mediterranean civilization that had somehow by-passed the stage of a genuine artistic culture. I realized that I, and perhaps a good many others, had always been going on an assumption that now looked much more contingent than necessary: history had shown great cultures arising in the past out of epochs of great wealth and power, so that unconsciously we had become possessed by a notion of spontaneous generation, believing that America, this crude but rich and powerful youth among the nations, would some day have *its own* culture just as inevitably as all the powers of the past had come into theirs. Now a question came to take the place of this once partly-unconscious but wholly confident belief: Perhaps America had already by-passed the stage of a real artistic culture? Or was well on the way to by-passing it?

To Carthage, then, I came, and over the glittering stalagmites of the New York skyline I could see this question hovering, and it was this question that came to meet me with the flat earth that spun up obliquely under the wheels of the landing plane.

II. THE FOLK AND THE MASS: THE IMMIGRANT

Now, whenever I walk in these streets, I look out of the eyes of this question upon the Grand Canyon of the Big Money, where the surplus of power and wealth threatens to swamp any real human culture. If cultures of the past have arisen only from an economic surplus, perhaps the condition, when in excess, cancels the very possibility of growth, and the American may be too rich to have patience for the sacrifices that culture demands.

At any rate, the critics and historians who have lately been engaged in exhuming an American tradition as something available for our art now seem to me to have missed the overwhelming question for this moment of our history. Constance Rourke, in her *Roots of American Culture*, digs up many touching relics of folk art from our early history: Shakers, folk painters, colonial theatricals; but when she comes to project a possible destiny for

American art on the basis of this material, she forgets everything that is happening to America now:

'Now whether or not so positive a contrast exists between our artistic intention and that of European groups, the fact remains that our "configuration" is not the European "configuration", either socially or geographically. . . . It would seem obvious that our art, if we are to have one, must spring from the centre rather than from the periphery of our social pattern.

'Let us lay down the principle that the American artist cannot take off from the same points of departure as the European artist. Let us accept the fact that it is futile for the American artist to try to "catch up" with Europeans because at best he is trying to do something of his own.'

And finally:

'Perhaps the American artist cannot now assume those simple and intuitive attitudes which the artist always wants—which most of us want—but he may consciously work toward a discovery of our traditions, attempt to use them, and eventually take his inevitable place.'

The first part of this last sentence seems to me to give away the game. Yes, the American must work toward his centre, but what does he find there? Hardly those quaint curios that Constant Rourke exhumes, like so many spinning wheels or old andirons that you find in the little antique shops throughout New England. What relevance has the obscure painter of the Erie-Canal, Voltaire Combe, for a young artist now existing in metropolitan New York, who has been looking at the world for some time with the complicated vision of modern painting? The folk art that Constance Rourke talks of is dead and drowned beneath a commercial culture uniform throughout America.

Take the example of what has been happening to jazz and popular song in America. In the 'twenties and 'thirties popular songs used to have an individuality, bounce, wit, or at least topical relevance to events like the Crash or the Depression. But the music industry has now swallowed most of the folk elements of jazz, the popular song has become the 'hit song', something that can be put across by clever radio manipulation, and therefore need not be anything more than a sentimental blur. This is the singing style of Frank Sinatra, which depends on nothing so much as on making any song sound like any other. Turn on the radio, words

and tune (if any) float out in an indistinguishable murmur, and the bobbysox girls scream like hyenas when the droning voice stops. The law of modern culture has been that the mass corrupts the *élite*, but here we have come upon something new and worse: *the mass corrupts the folk*. Folk art demands the existence of a relatively small community expressing itself through the media of song, dance, handicraft; but since entertainment has become a large-scale capitalist enterprise in America, our various cultural exploiters—Hollywood, the radio, the magazine syndicates—have very efficiently made the popular community disappear into the mass.

The 'twenties also gave us such superior popular artists as Lardner, Fitzgerald, George Gershwin, all of whom might have been really major artists had this not involved a separation from American life of which they were not capable. Their unique quality was to retain their popular roots, and, within the narrower limits thus imposed, produce something real and convincing. I doubt that their phenomenon could be repeated today; the slick machine-tooled fiction of the *New Yorker* has produced a taste that would find Lardner too crude and would require Fitzgerald to be more tired, sophisticated, and mincing. And instead of *Porgy and Bess*, full of authentic bits, we have the smooth, expertly paced musical show like *Oklahoma*.

We have got on to the subject of the sociology of the culture, about which I have made some remarks elsewhere,¹ so that here I should like not to repeat but to draw some further conclusions. Once we pose the sociological question we pose the question of our American middle classes. The literature of the period before the Civil War came to an end when its social base—the colonial bourgeoisie and a fundamentally agrarian society—was superseded by the new capitalist class that came to power during and after the war. The earlier literature seemed to have about as much relevance to the new America as Beowulf to the Elizabethans. Though we are currently finding out that the literature of the decades immediately following the Civil War was not the complete blank we first thought it, it was certainly a terrible drop from the earlier period. The new capitalist class was crude, grasping and vulgar, which is the historical way with all new classes; but why, we have to ask, has this class shown not the least sign

¹ 'The Resistance.' *Partisan Review*, Sept. 1946.

of settling down into any productive and genuine culture of its own?

The historical parallel would be Molière's Bourgeois Gentilhomme, who was in his time as crude, *arriviste*, and uneducated as our first American millionaires. But what happened? The bourgeois gentilhomme settled down into culture, and the French bourgeoisie produced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries one of the great cultures of history. Why does the American bourgeoisie, on the historical scene now since the 1870s, aspire at its very highest only to the culture purveyed by the *New York Sunday Times Book Review* and the Book of the Month Club? There are probably many causes, but one suspects chiefly the excessive riches of the United States: why should we expect our middle classes to read anything requiring effort and attention when they have so many other easy mechanical ways of escaping boredom and so many commercial panders to their sloth? The German bourgeois, when he wanted music, organized his string quartets at home, the American family tunes in the radio.

And, of course, our middle classes have found their perfect historical expression and spokesman in the professional middlebrow. In 1915, when Van Wyck Brooks was still a valuable (that is, hostile) critic of American life, he summed up our cultural situation in the conflict between lowbrow and highbrow. These were peculiarly American terms, Brooks observed, applying nowhere else in the world so appositely; they defined the poles between which all American writing oscillated: the cold pallor of the Genteel Tradition on the one hand, and, on the other, the flushed ruddy vulgarity, lack of form, ideas, or finesse in our popular, folk or pseudo-folk writers. But America's cultural evolution since 1915 has introduced the middle term that altogether upsets Brooks's original dichotomy: highbrow and lowbrow have given way to the complete domination by the middlebrow. Not only does the middlebrow reach millions through magazines like *Time* and the *New Yorker*, he has even infiltrated the highest places in our academic life; so that, confident and cocksure, he no longer contents himself merely with his original role, which was to make easy digests of culture for a mass audience, but carries on an aggressive, often cleverly veiled, warfare against all things difficult and 'highbrow'.

These are some of the social facts that make me raise the

perspective of Carthage, though I intend no parallel between the two very different civilizations beyond the possibility that art may be unnecessary to either. Because we learn about past civilizations chiefly through their art, we come to associate art with civilization much too automatically. The structures of civilization are for human survival, and the production and enjoyment of literature as we have known it in the past is not a necessity of life. A society whose energies are directed principally to technology, and where art appears only as a mass-produced and easy form of 'escape' or 'relaxation', is not only possible, but seems the actual direction in which America is travelling.

But not to appear too 'negative' or 'destructive' or any of the other things by which people condemn the effort to be honest, I do see one group in American life as the possible pinch of spice that might eventually season the whole dish: the immigrant. I include under this term not merely the recently arrived in America, but all who are not so far removed from that arrival that they have ceased to think of themselves in relation to Europe.

For myself, I propose to convert the immigrant's condition into a cultural goal. Since I have no sense of ownership of Ralph Waldo Emerson, I see no reason why I should not go directly to Kant for my Transcendentalism, if I want any; there is, after all, no tariff. If I find Stendhal more relevant to my life and intelligence than Hawthorne, why should I not say so and study the Frenchman more intensively than the American? There is not enough time to live, and we have to decide quite early what few subjects we can hope to know well. I must even confess to some ambivalent feelings when I read the recent admirable poetry of Robert Lowell, which is loud with the ghosts of his American ancestors. As personal ghosts they function very well, but Lowell seeks to load them with a legendary and epic weight, which for me they cannot quite bear, so that I am incapable at that point of the complete participation demanded of the ideal reader.

Well then, since the accident of my birth and some obscurer accident of my nature have thrown me out of American life, I propose to make capital of my estrangement, and my way of being American shall be to appropriate whatever in Europe I can and want. This is the most personal statement I can make in the way of a programme, yet the personal attitude would not be worth very much if it did not also correspond to the very real

and actual political situation of America and Europe. So far as Western Europe still retains any political and cultural existence of its own, it does so against the protecting bulwark of the United States. I am converting this fundamental political reality into a cultural goal. It should be obvious that this appropriation of Europe has nothing to do with that of the Gilded Age, when the American pilgrims thought they could bring back Europe in a load of valuable bric-à-brac; we have no money to spend, and we do not expect to purchase any substitute for the difficult work of making something of our own. America may not have by-passed the stage of a genuine culture, but it has certainly gone beyond the stage of a purely nationalist one. When politics has already gone beyond the stage where directly national issues were the dominating concern, any attempt to return culture to purely national and American origins is a hopeless regression to a past that can never come alive again.

And, in any case, has not America always belonged to the immigrant?

III. 'OUR' LANGUAGE

Turning from sociology, which is likely to get dull, to the question of our American language, we shall, nevertheless, find ourselves coming around in the end to the same realities. We inherit the English language with its enormous resources, chief of which, perhaps, is its great plasticity to absorb new strains within its hybrid richness. America has added a strain of its own, and there can be no doubt that there is such a thing as an American style. Recently I had the powerful experience of reading *Huckleberry Finn*, which I had not picked up since childhood, and finding (or hearing) the filiation of Sherwood Anderson and Hemingway so palpable and definite.

'The stars were shining, and the leaves rustled in the woods ever so mournful; and I heard an owl, away off, who-whooping about somebody that was dead, and a whippowill and a dog crying about somebody that was going to die; and the wind was trying to whisper something to me, and I couldn't make out what it was, and so it made the cold shivers run over me. Then away out in the woods I heard that kind of sound that a ghost makes when it wants to tell about something that's on its mind and can't make itself understood, and so can't lie easy in its grave, and has to go about that way every night grieving. I got so downhearted and

scared I did wish I had some company. Pretty soon a spider went crawling up my shoulder, and I flipped it off and it lit in the candle; and before I budged it was all shrivelled up.'

The American writer, then, has solved the problem of a style in relation to the spoken language, but only for fiction. The need of American writing today is precisely a prose style for all expository uses that will be at once generally available and in community with the spoken language. I am not talking about a prose for strictly 'literary' uses only, but one that will be written easily and naturally by historians, scholars, economists and politicians. If you compare the writing by scholars of comparable stature in England and America, I think you will find that nine times out of ten the Englishman's style is superior in ease and lucidity: the difference between the languages of British and American philosophy would make a powerful illustration, and one need only think of the different styles of Bertrand Russell and John Dewey. You in England do have an established tradition of an expository prose in relation to your spoken language, which we Americans, through our very lack, may perceive more keenly, as when Henry James made at Bryn Mawr his famous tirade against our American speech. But you required history and John Dryden to conquer this territory of a functional, clear, direct prose, while we, in the midst of our historical struggle with the American language, still await our Dryden. And when the words do not come so easily, who can blame our scholars if they sometimes relinquish the struggle altogether? Even our literary critics suffer from the same difficulty: over the past two decades America has produced a remarkable and distinguished body of criticism, but no one will say, I think, that it does not often suffer from a language that is not the most natural and lucid in the world.

But language is communication, and every problem in language becomes also a social problem. The social problem, here as elsewhere, is one of producers and consumers: Who will write this prose? For what audience? What will be communicated by it? So long as there is no wide or integrated public in America that is interested in ideas and their discussion, this need of a satisfactory prose will never be felt as urgent and is thereby so much farther from consummation. The small literary group that is interested in ideas has been driven, over the last decades, into the academic cloister, and the tradition of the American academy is one of an

over-specialization that has never felt the need of a decent general communication. The parts of our culture that have not been taken over by commercialism are being rapidly surrendered to academism, so that some of our reviews show that spreading pallor of staid dullness which is literary death.

This problem of our language may be one reason why we in America admire James Joyce much more than you do in England. His attitude obviously carries the special feeling of the Irishman's revolt against England, which is not relevant to our American situation, but anyone who has read H. L. Mencken's *The American Language* must realize that the immigrant has permanently modified our ear for English so that we come to it with something of Joyce's sense of being a foreigner: we can make it ours only by adding something of our own. It is not that we do not respond to the great models in English literature, but the problem is not to be solved out of hand by fixing on this or that example from the past. It is a question of our day-to-day speech, our struggles with this speech, and the establishing of a viable expository medium on its basis. At which point we seem to tread a vicious circle: this medium will not exist unless there is a real group of consumers (which the medium itself must summon into existence) for what Balzac called 'the literature of ideas'. Carthage?

IV. WALK IN AND OUT OF THE SUN

I have been writing these random notes about America without attempting a systematic comment on any American writer, and I am conscious now that my text throughout has really been this city itself, where walking the streets I have been trying to read the American riddle. No doubt, New York is not America, and you can find this reflected a hundred ways in popular speech and attitudes; with its conglomerate foreign populations it is above all the immigrants' city, suggesting an outpost of some last European capital; but it is American too, all too American, the point where the forces of American life converge at their highest tension and tempo. That distance (on which I remarked at the beginning) that I feel between myself and most of the American authors I read is, perhaps, only a reflection of the distance between New York and the other American communities in which I have lived or tried to live at various times; and, deeper still, the distance

between myself and the driving life of this city itself. When there is no real community, you sometimes feel strangest in the company of the members of your own family. Thus William Faulkner moves me more powerfully than any other American novelist because he seems actually to incarnate (not merely express) the alienation in American life at its deepest level, where it isolates not one group from the rest of the community, but every man from every other; those puppets, his characters, are blown into life only by the wind of violence that is nothing but his own fierce effort to overcome their distance from himself—his distance from himself; an irony, not at all amusing, in a writer who, more than any of our novelists, has sought to immerse himself in a thoroughly regional existence.

Perhaps I ought to conclude, then, by taking you, my English reader, on a walk through the streets of my text itself, pointing out how the American deities breathe over our shoulder at every step. Certainly, it would be a powerful theme, no city in the world offers so much in the way of spectacle, though we must not confuse spectacle with beauty which cannot exist out of human scale. On a clear winter afternoon (New York's best light), and seen from anywhere above the thirtieth storey, New York offers cubism and perspective at once in the most startling and unimaginable shapes; and then the approaches to the city, its rivers and waterfront, its sixteen bridges and its lights, its . . . But enough, my Muse! you have no talent for this lyric Cook's tour; let the European come and gasp, the American must abide and question; doubt, suspect, deny; ask: 'Is it possible for me to live a really human life here? How? Where?'

Perhaps in this old tenement (why, it is where I live!) from which we step out into the morning sun that warms indifferently the long rows of uncollected garbage cans, the prowling cats, and blowsy old women conversing on doorsteps? We are in Greenwich Village, which enjoyed during the 'twenties a bright blaze of life as our Bohemia; but do not expect anything like a Parisian Latin Quarter, here are no cafés and no open-air community of the intellectual life. The handful of people who devote themselves to the life of intelligence and the arts are scattered about, very lonely and slowly encroached upon: a tenement crumbles and a tall apartment building rises in its place, where the middle-class couples come to live, both returning from an uptown office at

the end of their day to buy their dinner in the corner delicatessen. You do not live here for any richly Bohemian gratifications, but because you can find, or could find before the war, a crumbling flat cheaper than in other sections of the city. There is usually some prosaic reason behind the characteristics by which the popular imagination defines the Bohemian: those clothes he wears are not a carefully chosen uniform, but the remains of an ordinary and cheap suit that has decayed around the nucleus of its empty pocket. All around us the immigrant poor swarm, but they do not live here from choice and they dream of the day when they will get their foot one rung higher on the social ladder and be able to move out to the lower middle-class suburbs of Queens and Brooklyn.

On a clear day like this, you can see in the distance the towers of Wall Street to the south and the mid-town towers to the north, which cast their invisible shadow over this shabby neighbourhood. In that shadow we live and move; and even these girls you see walking about in slacks tell their own story of those distant buildings.

Consider them carefully: the Village is filled with their Ladies' Sewing Circles of the Arts, engaged, amid their ingrown gossip and unorthodox amours, in embroidering the literature of feminine sensibility. Art that springs from a rich, rather than impoverished, life has a greater chance of being interesting, and the more a writer participates in the powerful occasions and groups of his time, the more likely he is to create characters that bear the weight of generalization. Scott Fitzgerald (who had in this respect the real novelist's sense) understood this, and he sought to locate his characters, like Gatsby and Monroe Stahr, in crucial areas of American experience, where they were capable of becoming quasi-symbolic figures. But Fitzgerald could maintain his contact with the rich and powerful only through earning \$35,000 a year by writing trash for the *Saturday Evening Post*. The writer who would deal with this city ought to have access to the people who sit in the high places of those distant towers, Radio City or Wall Street, who amuse themselves in the Stork Club or pull the impresario's strings of Broadway; but it is possible for him to move in their world only by selling out and ceasing to be serious. In America the man must make money or feel his masculinity compromised; integrity seems on its way to becoming the property of these girls walking about the Village in slacks, the

novel of feminine sensibility may soon be the only kind of deliberately artistic fiction we have, and once again the American woman will have triumphed over the American male.

If I go this morning to the Central Library at 42nd Street, I begin again, consciously or unconsciously, to read the same American features in the people about me: professional researchers from the offices of the magazine syndicates, people reading for God knows what certificate from God knows what Extension course—and the unclassifiables, like myself, who quickly betray themselves by the uneasy eye or the shabby exterior. Odious comparisons! No doubt my mind would not run on these things if it, too, were not penetrated by the inhuman competitiveness of American life, which none of us here can escape, and which makes it harder for the young artist or intellectual to endure a cheerful poverty. Even here in this quiet reading-room the American deity of Success breathes on the back of my neck.

At noon a cigarette under the colonnade in front of the Library while we watch the clerks and stenographers pour pell-mell out of the great buildings for their lunchtime sandwich and chocolate malted. (In America we do not yet know the meaning of food.) Against these crowds, and against the huge surrounding buildings that have framed my life since childhood, I must take the measure of my own existence. To make (but by an act of real appropriation) certain parts of a foreign culture accessible to one's countrymen would seem a very small thing; but we may recall that it was the chief accomplishment of a poet who has had, perhaps, as much influence as any, and Horace himself did not think it a small thing:

ex humili potens
princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos
deduxisse modos.

An American is not likely to parallel the rest of that boast: in this country one will be read by a few thousand people at most, and win the direct approval of perhaps a few dozen. And if this should seem un-American in its smallness of scale, it may nevertheless be something we call American in the end. 'If I can construct one small thing on which I can build,' said Paul Klee—and who knows but there may be a divine balance somewhere in which any such small, *genuine* thing will weigh against one of these immense skyscrapers:

PART II

INTIMATIONS OF YES

MUSIC IS INTERNATIONAL

W. H. AUDEN

Orchestras have so long been speaking
This universal language that the Greek
And the Barbarian have both mastered
Its enigmatic grammar which at last
Says all things well. But who is worthy?
What is sweet? What is sound? Much of the earth
Is austere, her temperate regions
Swarming with cops and robbers; germs besiege
The walled towns, and among the living
The captured outnumber the fugitive.
Where silence is coldest and darkest,
Among the staring blemishes that mark
War's havocking slot, it is easy
To guess what dream such vaulting cries release:
The unamerican survivor
Hears angels drinking fruit-juice with their wives
Or making money in an open
Unpoliced air. But what is our hope,
As with an ostentatious rightness
These gratuitous sounds like water and light
Bless the Republic? Do they sponsor
For us the mornes and motted mammelons,
The sharp streams and sottering springs of
A commuter's wish, where each frescade rings
With melodious booing and hooing
As some natural lovejoy deigns to woo,
And nothing dreadful ever happened?
Probably yes. We are easy to trap,
Being Adam's children, as thirsty
For mere illusion still as when the first
Comfortable heresy crooned to
The proud flesh founded on the self-made wound,
And what we find rousing or touching

Tells us little and confuses us much.

As Shaw says; 'Music is the brandy
Of the damned'. It was from the good old grand

Composers the progressive kind of
Tyrant learned how to melt the legal mind

With a visceral a-ha; fill a

Dwarf's ears with sforzandos and the dwarf will

Believe he's a giant; the orchestral

Metaphor bamboozles the most oppressed;

As a trombone the clerk will bravely

Go oom-pah oom-pah to his minor grave:

So that today one recognizes

The Machiavell by the hair in his eyes,

His conductor's hands. Yet the jussive

Elohim are here too, asking for us

Through the noise. To forgive is not so

Simple as it is made to sound; a lot

Of time will be quite wasted, many

Promising days end badly, and again

We shall offend. But let us listen

To the song which seems to absorb all this.

For these halcyon structures are useful

As structures go—though not to be confused

With anything really important

Like feeding strays or looking pleased when caught

By a bore or a hideola.

Deserving nothing, the sensible soul

Will rejoice at the sudden mansion

Of any joy. Besides, there is a chance

We may someday need very much to

Remember when we were happy; one such

Future would be the exile's ending

With no graves to visit, no socks to mend,

Another, to be short of breath yet

Staying on to oblige, postponing death.

Listen! Even the dinner waltz in

Its formal way is a voice that assaults

International wrong, so quickly,

Completely delivering to the sick,

Sad, soiled prosopon of our ageing

Present the perdition of all her rage.

BEN SHAHN AND MORRIS GRAVES

JAMES THRALL SOBY

THERE is a dwindling tendency among Europeans to think of American artists either as expatriate stylists or as homespun realists: West, Whistler and Sargent as guiding stars in one category; Eakins and Homer in the other. The distinction has been made most often in England, and quite naturally, for with the exception of Mary Cassatt all our famous early exiles practised in London and contributed there to a worldly ambiance for art, West through academic position, Whistler through personal flamboyance, Sargent by social manipulation, their promotional methods changing with the nature of patronage. There can be no doubt that the talents of these artists were profoundly affected by their residence abroad, though we may still argue in what final degree. Today, however, the gains and penalties of expatriation are beside the point in considering the living artists of our two countries, for no first-rate American painter now centres his career anywhere but at home, nor, I think, does any Englishman. Art has become so international in communication that it would be idle for a painter to live abroad merely to warm his wits; indeed, we may one day reach the stage where only the world capitals can harbour a limited provincialism within the insulating vigour of their own activity. Yet the actual genesis of painting and sculpture has perhaps become more national in very recent years, and it may be that we appreciate each other most when each speaks clearly his native language, instead of attempting a universal idiom.

A case in point is the favourable reception accorded two younger American artists at the Tate Gallery's 1946 exhibition of American painting. The artists are Ben Shahn (b. 1898) and Morris Graves (b. 1910). Both are decidedly American in identity; both are nourished by New World environment; and a fundamental difference between them is that Shahn looks outward for basic inspiration, while Graves looks inward.

Their childhoods were totally unlike. Shahn was born in Russia, came to America at the age of eight, and grew up in the poorer sections of Brooklyn. His art has never ceased to reflect the special atmosphere of life in an American metropolis. We cannot imagine him painting a landscape pure and simple, though urban

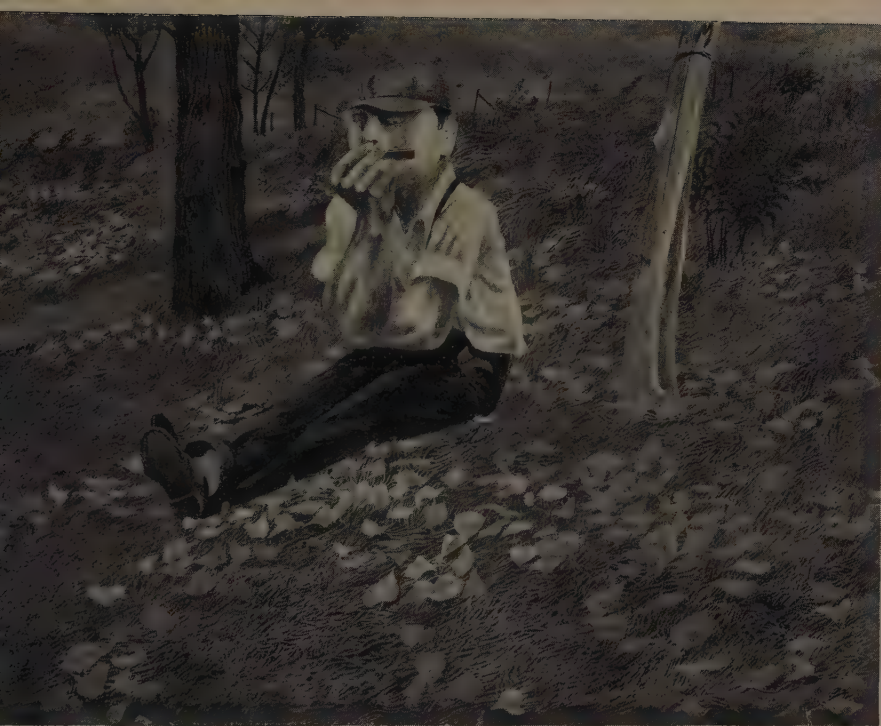
architecture quite frequently supplies a dominant theme in his compositions, even if invariably accompanied by figures. He lives and works in the New Jersey countryside, for the sake of family comfort and freedom rather than through personal preference. He does not, however, live on a farm or in a picturesque village, as do so many American painters and writers. He lives at Roosevelt, New Jersey, in a Federal housing development for garment workers, built during the New Deal in the modern architectural style. He holds political office in his specialized community, and his first completed mural painting (1937-38) occupies a wall in the development's community centre; its subject matter describes the betterment of his neighbours' lives through union membership. Shahn goes often to New York City, not only because he finds there the external properties which appear frequently in his works—factory buildings, tenements, lunch-rooms, handball courts, and so on—but because there, most inescapably, the social issues of his time apply and are discussed. His unfailing nourishment is the reality of his period, though transformed by intensely imaginative gifts, as will appear.

Morris Graves is extremely different in personal temperament and in procedure as an artist. When he was a year old his family moved from Oregon to the Seattle area of the State of Washington, and except for travel in America and the Orient, he has lived there ever since, for several years now in a remote section of the sea-coast near Anacortes, alone except for rare visitors, surrounded by the animals, rocks, pines and birds which are the subjects of his paintings. A deeply religious man, he has found the ideals of Vedanta sympathetic, but has held aloof from formal commitment to any cult. His existence consists largely in contemplation, and only after the most profound meditative preparation does he attempt to paint at all. To Shahn's tangible humanism, expressed in his paintings and through frequent activity as a graphic arts propagandist for Government bureaux and labour organizations, Graves opposes a dissimilar yet morally related concept: the use of art as an instrument to deepen and clarify man's spiritual nature, to proceed, as he puts it, 'toward the Eastern art's basis of considerations of metaphysical perceptions which produce creative painting as a record—an outflowing—of religious experience'.

A safe generalization, then, would seem to be that Shahn is a realist and Graves a mystic poet, the one akin to Hogarth, the

other to William Blake. Yet before settling on so final a differentiation between the two men, we must look more carefully at the factors affecting the development of each and at their art itself. Shahn, to begin with, was old enough when he left Russia to have absorbed the atmosphere of folk-lore and festival which characterized smaller Russian towns, so that in gaiety and richness of detail his mature painting sometimes parallels that of Marc Chagall. He was old enough, too, to have reacted to the oppressive social order in which his place was relatively fixed as the member of a humble Jewish family. As a child he developed a hatred of injustice—the only thing, he says, that he hates today. He has told in an interview of reading at school in Russia the story of the Ark of the Covenant being brought to a temple and balanced precariously on a single pole, while God, as a test of faith, gave orders to the people that no one should touch it, no matter what happened. 'One man', Shahn recounts, 'saw it beginning to totter, and he rushed up to help. He was struck dead. I refused to go to school for a week after we read that story. It seemed so damn unfair. And it still does.' There could be no more revealing indication of Shahn's essential anti-mysticism of mind, his reverence for reality as opposed to myth, his belief in and conscience toward present circumstance.

Growing up in Brooklyn, Shahn found work as a lithographer's apprentice, like so many leading American artists of the nineteenth century and our own, and to this training may partly be attributed the precision with which he now handles lettering and intricate flowered patterns in certain of his pictures. He read a great deal, worked his way through several terms of college, and studied painting and sculpture at the National Academy of Design. In 1925 and again in 1927 he travelled widely in France, Italy, Spain and North Africa, and for several years thereafter painted in an expressionist manner which reflected his regard for Rouault and for those modern artists who had evolved a figure style of archaistic stylization based on pre-Christian, tribal and Mannerist sources. Then, in 1930, he made up his mind that an art of aesthetic sensation was alien to his temperament and heritage, that he was interested most of all in stories, people and social commentary. Between 1931 and 1934 he thereupon executed several series of small paintings, each series illustrating related incidents of a given theme, in the manner of Hogarth's 'Marriage à la Mode', except that the scenes did not follow a chronological



Collection, Edgar J. Kaufman Jr., New York

BEN SHAHN: 'Pretty girl milking a cow'. 1940



The Downtown Gallery, New York

Spring, 1946



The Red Stairway. 1944

City Art Museum, St. Louis, Mo.



MORRIS GRAVES: Wounded Gull. 1943

Collection, Robert Tamm

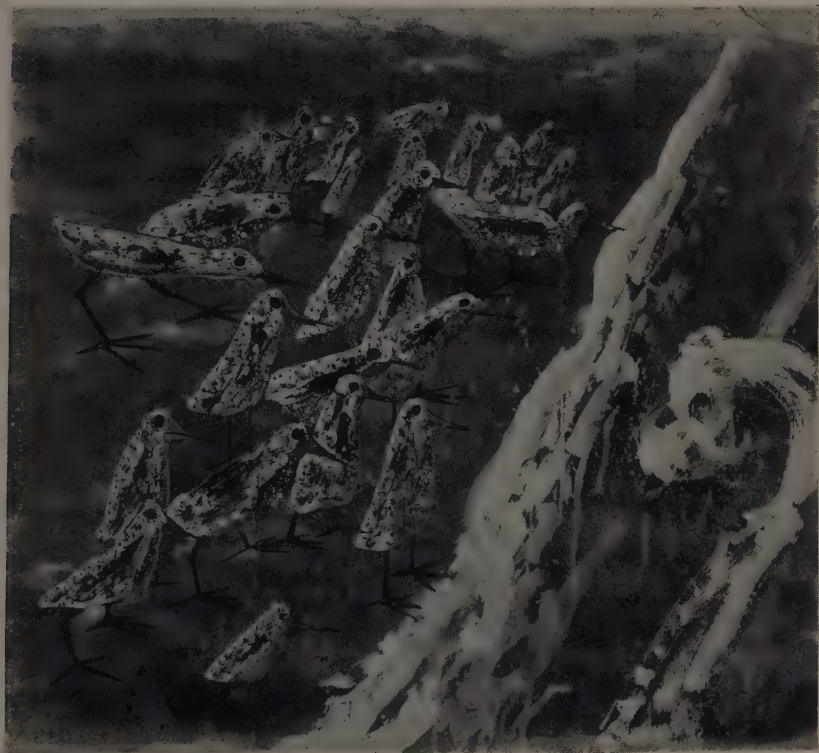


Bird Singing
in the
Moonlight.
1938-39

Museum
of Modern Art
New York

Tree Birds.
1940

Museum
of Modern Art,
New York





Joyous
young pine.
1944

sequence toward a moralizing climax, but were presented as more or less separable factual images. The two most extensive series were based on political *causes célèbres*, both American: the trial of the self-admitted anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti, convicted in 1921, in the fury of a national 'Red' hunt, of a murder they quite certainly did not commit (they were executed in 1927); and the case of the persecuted labour leader, Tom Mooney. The two series won Shahn a considerable fame and the esteem of the Mexican muralist, Diego Rivera, whose assistant he became for a short time, and whose ideological and technical influence on the younger painter is apparent in Shahn's first mural, at Roosevelt, New Jersey.

Graves's beginnings were decidedly different. He grew up in the superbly wild landscape of the Washington coast. He completed his secondary education, but with the exception of brief training under a high school art instructor, he learned to paint mainly by experiment and by association with artists he admired. In 1930 he worked his way to Japan. This and a subsequent voyage to the Virgin Islands (1940) have been of great importance in his development. His rapt memories of the East have been reinforced in more recent years by a close study of the fine Oriental collections in American museums, notably the Seattle Art Museum, and by an appreciation of the researches of such archaeologists as Dr. Ernest Fenollosa and Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. Gradually his interest in the Orient has focused almost exclusively on Japan, most urgently on Kyoto where lately, as a Guggenheim Fellow, he has been exploring the art collections in museums, monasteries and private homes. He is passionately interested in Japan's architecture as well, and in its celebrated gardens and its crafts.

If Graves has turned to the Orient for inspiration, he is also aware of twentieth-century developments in European and American art, and some years ago was greatly influenced by them. He speaks with respect of Chagall—I do not know what attracts him to so disparate an artist. He is often and much too glibly compared to Paul Klee. He knows and admires Klee's art, but it is a curious paradox that his regard for the late German master is mild in relation to that of Shahn, the realist, who worships Klee's paintings and has consciously emulated some of their virtues, as we shall see. And on the whole Graves and Klee are immeasurably separate. Klee was a painter of such varied imaginative endowment that everything he touched took on a special identity,

changing from picture to picture. A wine-glass could inspire him as well as a flower, and through much of his art there ran a tremendously alert humour which cut to the heart of profundity. Graves, on the other hand, is by comparison single-minded and single-visioned, and we nearly always feel in him the sway of a continuous, dark mood, not lacking in humour, but too brooding for wit. This, of course, is his strength, as Klee's faceted sensitivity was his. And in his absorption in nature, Graves may more rewardingly be compared to another modern American artist, Charles Burchfield, whose early watercolours are among the high points of native romantic art. But there is this difference to be noted: while Burchfield recorded the preternaturalism imagined by a susceptible child, Graves lets nature's tensions play out all within nature itself—the bird against the forest silence, the giddy snake against the moon.

The 1930s were difficult years for Graves. During the mid-decade depression years, he and friends wandered through the West in a car, painting, and attempting to sell their pictures by the roadside. In 1937 he came to New York City. Unlike Shahn, for whom New York has provided a constant stimulus, Graves was confused and disturbed by the city, and at one point sought refuge with Father Divine in Harlem, supporting himself by doing menial tasks for 'angels' of the cult. He was indifferent to New York's architecture and, typically, the scene which moved him most was that of a pigeon dying in the street; he bent over the bird and made a series of devout sketches. He returned to Seattle in 1938, and began to paint in oil and encaustic, modelling a heavy impasto to almost sculptural depth.¹ Some of his works of this period were planned in series, like Shahn's, and some, too, were related to external events—the 'Purification' series to the death of Pope Pius XI, the superb series of drawings, 'English, French, German and Roman Nightfall', to the Munich Pact. But in none of these pictures is there any reference to specific happening; all are symbolic equivalents for inner yearning and despair. The 'Purification' series consists of a group of abstract variants on landscape sections, many with chalices monumentally enthroned, as if these were models of the Anacortes hills laid out with Japanese

¹ At this point Graves was employed by the Federal W.P.A. Art Program. It is to the everlasting credit of that Program that it should have supported a 'private' artist like Graves no less than a 'public' artist like Shahn.

delicacy of asymmetric perception. The 'Nightfall' series portrays a suite of ruined furniture suitable for a meeting of a 'Gothick' or surrealist conclave. The chairs are strung over with precise red cobwebs, and no one sits in them, though the faces of Hitler, Chamberlain and Daladier would have proved irresistible to Shahn, had he undertaken the theme. Yet the spirit of Graves's 'Nightfall' drawings is strangely urbane; their *bizarrerie* has something of the knowledgeable precision of a Callot or a Fuseli; they are sophisticated drawings even if one senses in them a lonely strength.

Toward the end of 1938 Graves adopted the technique by which we know him today—gouache and watercolour applied on thin, wafery Chinese paper or on *kakemono* scrolls. His change in direction was not merely technical, however. On his return to Seattle he had come under the influence of Mark Tobey, an older artist of remarkable sensitivity who, after long experiment with advanced expressive means, had evolved what he called an art of 'white writing'—a psychic scribble which ran over the picture surface and conveyed a cat's-cradle image of the painter's response to outer experience and religious compulsion. Tobey had adopted the technique around 1935, after a trip to the Orient during which he had studied with the Chinese artist, Teng Kwei, but very likely his interest in the tenets of Bahai had been a more decisive influence. Graves, too, in the late 1930s was turning away from a material chaos toward a contemplative anagogy, and Tobey's painting struck him with tremendous force. Within a short time he had abandoned the thick impasto of his earlier pictures, and had adapted Tobey's 'white writing' to his own spiritual needs, developing its gouache and watercolour technique in a manner wholly his own. He now used a semi-automatic calligraphy to create a supernatural and romantic vision of the birds, snakes and small animals which fought each other and obeyed the moon on the rocky Anacortes coast. I say 'semi-automatic', for however spontaneously Graves's imagery may seem to evolve from his imagination, in final form it is often the result of long deliberation and careful revisions.

But meanwhile Shahn. After completing the Sacco-Vanzetti and Mooney series, he spent a good part of the succeeding ten years (1933-43) on public projects, as the employee of Federal agencies. While working on the Government's Public Works of

Art Project, he completed a series of tempera paintings on Prohibition (1933-34). These were followed by designs for murals showing old and reformed penal methods, commissioned as a Federal Emergency Relief Administration project. The murals themselves were intended for a prison corridor at Riker's Island in New York harbour, but were never executed because of academic opposition, though a poll of prisoners proved an overwhelmingly favourable reaction to the sketches. In 1937-38 Shahn finished for the Farm Security Administration the single-wall mural at Roosevelt, New Jersey, previously mentioned. With the help of his wife, he next completed a far more ambitious project for the U.S. Treasury's Public Buildings Administration: a series of fresco panels covering the walls of the Bronx post office and comprising a panorama of American industry and agriculture. The same Federal agency commissioned him to paint murals for the Social Security Building in Washington, D.C.; these illustrate the benefits of Social Security for the old, the poor, the dispossessed, and were completed between 1940 and 1942. During the war Shahn designed a brilliant series of posters for the Office of War Information, and from 1944 to 1946 was director of the graphic arts division of a left-wing labour organization.

In devoting so much of his time to communal projects, in taking sides aggressively on social issues, Shahn would seem to be the absolute opposite of Graves, whose pictures do not exhort the observer but rather hold a finger to his lips. Thus, on the basis of art's intended use, we arrive again at our early differentiation: Shahn the realist; Graves the mystic poet. We shall be mistaken if we accept the opposition as total. For quite apart from his public projects, Shahn has worked fairly steadily as an easel painter, and has developed over the past ten years into one of the most lyric of living American painters as well as into one of our most original satirists. If reality gives him a point of departure that he will never willingly lose from sight, he nevertheless transforms his images through the most subtle and poetic intervention of his pictorial imagination. I have spoken of his great esteem for Klee. In his own paintings the drawing often has a witching, autonomous energy comparable to Klee's—'a red line on white paper has a nervous identity of its own,' as Shahn puts the matter. His structure does not evolve from realistic observation merely, but makes full use of the intensifying deformations to be found in

cubism and its later, abstract ramifications. His colour is frequently as arbitrary as that of the French Symbolists or the German Expressionists, and departs from probability whenever he wishes to stress or enliven a moral, emotive or plastic content. A gifted photographer, he has used photographs as other artists use rough sketches, and was once greatly disturbed because for a time he could not find a building which appeared in one of his pictures, though he was sure he had seen it somewhere. Yet however strong his mistrust of fantasy-for-its-own-sake, he revivifies reality according to subjective expressive needs. No one, for example, can look at 'Spring', here reproduced, without being aware that Shahn is the heir to modern visual trends as well as of an earlier naturalism.

In late years Shahn has gradually tended to lessen the satirical impact of his easel painting, moving toward an elegiac art more closely related to European traditions than ever before. His first mature works—the Sacco-Vanzetti and Mooney series—had stressed the effect on the individual of organized and oppressive social forces. Toward the end of the 1930s, he began to portray the individual in terms of private emotional experience, and from this period dates a group of pictures conceived on Sunday excursions through the New Jersey countryside, pictures of American loneliness, of the single figure dwarfed by space, the idle man in a listless void. At the same time, he painted many images of children at play, depicting their appearance and gestures with magic acuteness, and suggesting unforgettably their imaginative seizures. The recent war inspired him to paint, as a kind of lyric mourning, a group of pictures in which he dwelt most often on Italy's ruined architecture, the sad lethargy of the homeless relieved by the fantasy of children playing amid the slithered, immortal stones. Since the war Shahn has alternated European with American subjects; his pictorial freshness, his conviction, his technical mastery have become steadily more impressive. We might sometimes call him now a gracious artist, spiritual ally of the fourteenth-century Sieneese, Fra Angelico, the brothers Le Nain, where once he seemed to belong wholly to the harder, satirical tradition. But reality is still his talisman, as it was for Théodore Géricault, and he is still concerned with public benefit from his art. Several of his recent paintings have been made into political or humanitarian posters by the addition of lettering, and perhaps no other living American artist, nor any of the past, has so successfully combined

propaganda with aesthetics, not alternating one with the other, but fusing the two with rare integrity.

Just as Shahn cannot be described simply as a realist, so Graves is not as detached a mystic as is sometimes supposed. His finished gouaches are so poetically transformed that we do not always realize how rich a treasury of nature's forms his memory holds. Indeed, the best of his works have an uncanny sense of privacy, as though they had not been witnessed by the painter, but had been recorded on enchanted film by shutters tripped in the primeval dark, with no one near. Nevertheless, many of his paintings partly depend for effect on an underlying sense of reality, incalculably attained, as when he portrays sandpipers, gulls or mice with emphasis on some mannerism of action or pose that establishes character as well as identity. Of course, even when he comes this near to realism, his images are weighted toward symbolism by an atmospheric use of 'white writing', and by the abstracting process of his design. He shifts the balance between the 'actual' and the 'imaginary' with great variety of intention and result. In some of his pictures and in many of his drawings, the actual plays a vigorous role—his sandpipers shoo a wave across the sand, a mouse congeals with fear. But in other paintings he achieves an art of nocturnal signs and omens: an owl is wrapped in a quilt of dreams; a snake rears hysterically at the moon; a blind bird ponders its hallucinations. His is an observation which learns particulars by heart in order to express a supernal generality. He is perhaps most successful when he utilizes both his inner and outer eye. In the 'Bird Singing in the Moonlight' (*see inset*), the cloud of moonlight which envelops the bird in chalice form is ectoplasmic in feeling. But the bird's beak and cumbersome legs are sharply real. Similarly, the tender humour of the drawing in this picture plays against the abstract texture of the colour—factual recognition and legerdemain existing together in an evocative synthesis.

I began by saying that Shahn and Graves were decidedly American as artists, and so they are. However important Shahn's Russian heritage may be, however near he draws at times to foreign lyricism, we cannot conceive of his art being produced elsewhere than in the American environment. This is not a matter of subject matter alone, but of the pulse and nerves of his paintings, evident in his recent idyllicism no less than in his early satire, and epitomized somehow in the description of his art that Shahn likes

best—'hardboiled—and beautiful'. And Graves, though his philosophical approach to art is based on Oriental example, worships the landscape of our Northwest, and in his pictures may be felt the same wild heartbeat which distinguishes Audubon's images from those produced contemporaneously in older countries. Like our great modern architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, Graves has transfused Japanese spiritual principles to an American empiricism; he has not merely applied a descriptive flair to exotic subjects, as did John La Farge and other earlier American painters who loved the Orient.

Shahn and Graves belong, respectively and in essence, to two of the oldest and most continuous American traditions in art: the realism which produced Copley, Eakins and Homer; and the romanticism which claimed Washington Allston, the Hudson River School, Albert Pinkham Ryder and Robert Newman. These two traditions, however, have touched hands often during their march, and few of our painters since the early nineteenth century have belonged to one or the other so whole-mindedly as Eakins and Ryder, our most unequivocal realist and our greatest romantic. As I have suggested in these pages, Shahn has sometimes abstracted his visual experience with such tenderness that the word 'romantic' seems appropriate to him in a limited sense, while Graves, for all his reliance on supernatural awareness, can tell us the exact weight of a plover's wing.

Both artists supply convincing evidence that neither of our two great pictorial traditions is anywhere near spent, though the self-conscious modernists, who hold that all art begins with Cézanne and Picasso, would have us think otherwise. Finally, what is especially heartening about Shahn and Graves, from the American viewpoint anyway, is that they, among others, clearly obviate the old distinction between the knowledgeable expatriate and the provincial homebody. Living and working in this country, they have taken what they needed from foreign sources, Shahn from Europe, Graves from the Orient. For American painters, situated as they are, it should be as natural to look east or west as for French artists to look north to Flanders and England or south to Greece and Italy. The careers of Shahn and Graves prove, I think, that our painters are at last able to look either way without losing the indigenous sense of direction without which art is merely a vacuous wind careering over a dead sea.

MARIANNE MOORE

A FACE

'I am not treacherous, callous, jealous, superstitious,
supercilious, venomous, or absolutely hideous':
 studying and studying its expression,
 exasperated desperation
 though at no real impasse,
 would gladly break the glass;

when love of order, ardour, uncircuitous simplicity,
with an expression of inquiry, are all one needs to be!
 Certain faces, a few, one or two—or one
 face photographed by recollection—
 to my mind, to my sight,
 must remain a delight.

WALLACE STEVENS

THE OWL IN THE SARCOPHAGUS

I

Two forms move among the dead high sleep
Who by his highness quiets them, high peace
Upon whose shoulders even the heavens rest,

Two brothers. And a third form, she that says
Good-bye in the darkness, speaking quietly there,
To those that cannot say good-bye themselves.

These forms are visible to the eye that needs,
Needs out of the whole necessity of sight.
The third form speaks, because the ear repeats,

Without a voice, inventions of farewell.
These forms are not abortive figures, rocks,
Impenetrable symbols, motionless. They move

About the night. They live without our light,
In an element not the heaviness of time,
In which reality is prodigy.

There sleep the brother is the father, too,
And peace is cousin by a hundred names
And she that in the syllable between life

And death cries quickly, in a flash of voice,
Keep you, keep you, I am gone, O keep you as
My memory, is the mother of all men

The earthly mother and the mother of
The dead. Only the thought of those dark three
Is dark, thought of the forms of dark desire.

II

There came a day, there was a day—one day
A man walked living among the forms of thought
To see their lustre truly as it is

And in harmonious prodigy to be,
A while, conceiving his passage as into a time,
That of itself stood still, perennial,

Less time than place, less place than thought of place
And, if of substance, a likeness of the earth,
That by resemblance twanged him through and through,

Releasing an abysmal melody,
A meeting, an emerging in the light,
A dazzle of remembrance and of sight.

III

There he saw well the foldings in the height
Of sleep, the whiteness folded into less,
Like many robings, as moving masses are,

As a moving mountain is, moving through day
And night, coloured from distances, central
Where luminous agitations come to rest,

In an ever-changing, calmest unity,
The unique composure, harshest streakings joined
In a vanishing-vanished violet that wraps round

The giant body the meanings of its folds,
The weaving and the crinkling and the vex,
As on water of an afternoon in the wind

After the wind has passed. Sleep realized
Was the whiteness that is the ultimate intellect,
A diamond jubilance beyond the fire,

That gives its power to the wild-ringed eye.
Then he breathed deeply the deep atmosphere
Of sleep, the accomplished, the fulfilling air.

IV

There peace, the godolphin and fellow, estranged,
estranged,

Hewn in their middle as the beam of leaves,
The prince of shither-shade and tinsel lights,

Stood flourishing the world. The brilliant height
And hollow of him by its brilliance calmed,
Its brightness burned the way good solace seethes.

This was peace after death, the brother of sleep,
The inhuman brother so much like, so near,
Yet vested in a foreign absolute,

Adorned with cryptic stones and sliding shines,
An immaculate personage in nothingness,
With the whole spirit sparkling in its cloth,

Generations of the imagination piled
In the manner of its stitchings, of its thread,
In the weaving round the wonder of its need,

And the first flowers upon it, an alphabet
By which to spell out holy doom and end,
A bee for the remembering of happiness.

Peace stood with our last blood adorned, last mind,
Damasked in the originals of green,
A thousand begettings of the broken bold.

This is that figure stationed at our end,
Always, in brilliance, fatal, final, formed
Out of our lives to keep us in our death,

To watch us in the summer of Cyclops
Underground, a king as candle by our beds
In a robe that is our glory as he guards.

V

But she that says good-bye losing in self
The sense of self, rosed out of prestiges
Of rose, stood tall in self not symbol, quick

And potent, an influence felt instead of seen.
She spoke with backward gestures of her hand.
She held men closely with discovery,

Almost as speed discovers, in the way
Invisible change discovers what is changed,
In the way what was has ceased to be what is.

It was not her look but a knowledge that she had.
She was a self that knew, an inner thing,
Subtler than look's declaiming, although she moved

With a sad splendour, beyond artifice,
Impassioned by the knowledge that she had,
There on the edges of oblivion.

O exhalation, O fling without a sleeve
And motion outward, reddened and resolved
From sight, in the silence that follows her last word—

VI

This is the mythology of modern death
And these, in their mufflings, monsters of elegy,
Of their own marvel made, of pity made,

Compounded and compounded, life by life,
 These are death's own supremest images,
 The pure perfections of parental space,

The children of a desire that is the will,
 Even of death, the beings of the mind
 In the light-bound space of the mind, the floreate flare . . .

It is a child that sings itself to sleep,
 The mind, among the creatures that it makes,
 The people, those by whom it lives and dies.

AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE: FOUR NEW BUILDINGS

PHILIP C. JOHNSON AND
 EDGAR KAUFMANN, JR.

MODERN has won the battle of the styles, yet architecture in the United States today is singularly distraught. Architectural practice, always a pitiful fraction of our total building, is now reduced to a minimum by the agonies of a *laissez-presque-faire* transition from war to peace.

Besides meeting a payroll and expense account, the architect is often expected to compete with planners in analysing social needs, with publicity experts in concocting novel eye-catchers, and with philosophers in judging new aesthetic panaceas. He is shaken in his sense of scale by plans for the United Nations centre and similar concentrations. He is often somewhat helpless, since our schools of architecture have thrown out order with the Orders. Moreover, regular and critical appraisals have not been printed since Lewis Mumford was successfully sued for his honest words in the *New Yorker* in 1926.

Against this chaos, the importance of sustained individual effort

stands out clearly. Four recent works, each a major effort by a strong creative architect, are presented here: two by Frank Lloyd Wright and one each by Mies van der Rohe and Marcel Breuer. The designs by Wright and Breuer are exuberantly articulated, while that of Mies is unsparingly uniform. It is this exceeding characterization which makes these designs outstanding examples, worthy of discussion.

The scheme most likely to be known in Britain is Wright's Museum of Non-Objective Art, scheduled to be built in New York on Central Park. It is to house a large collection of modern art assembled under the direction of Baroneß Hilla von Rebay by the munificence of Solomon Guggenheim. In Wright's design a splendid low cupola of glass tubing protects and illumines a spacious circular court, around which a broad spiral ramp winds gently down to the earth. This spiral is self-supporting like a coil spring—no columns or load-bearing walls intervene. The broad ramp turns an upcurved edge to the court, while towards the city its edge becomes a high wall for pictures, lit by an inclined clerestory of glass tubes. The easy curvature of the wall and the slight angle of descent are complemented by the outward slope of the main exhibition wall. Movable exhibition screens may be placed on the ramp at will. Visitors will be able to rise or descend by elevators to any level of the continuous display space. The elevator shaft is marked at the top by a hemisphere of glass tubes. Special halls for projecting coloured light compositions and for other events are provided below street level. The business and curatorial offices are housed in an 'L'-shaped block, low and largely rectangular, which will lie further back from the street than shown in the model. This relocation will emphasize the dominance of the massy tower rising toward a street corner with clear space around. The inevitably misleading scale of a model is emphasized in our illustration by gross lighting. Yet scale is the key to this design, for by this means alone the architect tames the tense coil whose every plane belies the common practice of building. Frank Lloyd Wright never fails to create a poetic sense of space in his buildings, and the courts of this museum may be expected to illustrate this particularly.

However unconventional his museum may seem, Wright has taken an even more empyreal flight of fancy in heretofore unpublished plans for a private sports domain in Hollywood Hills,

California, for Huntington Hartford. Wright himself has compared this design to a tree. Perhaps in our era only Antonio Gaudi could truly have appreciated these free imaginative forms licensed by a daring command of structure—certainly they will dizzy most who see them. The structure is planned on a high comb of hills above Los Angeles and juts forward, inclining over the valleys below. The main three-sided mass of masonry grasps, with perfect economy of cantilever, three shallow saucers of concrete, concentrically reinforced. These are shaded by similarly shaped roofs of glass tubing. On the drawing, the lunettes pierced in two of these show the floor level at the straight edge. These two saucers are, respectively, lounge and restaurant-dance floor. Above curves a sundeck of similar form. All of these levels are reached by an elevator which follows the incline of the masonry trigon. Below, thrust out from the terraced hillside on its own base, floats the rimmed bowl that is the swimming pool. Further below to the left lies a circle with tennis courts. Visible between the two sports areas and lying above them, is the curved curb of the entrance plaza. Once and for all time Wright has stated here that his architecture can lift pure geometric forms into the free reaches of space above the earth without the slightest echo of European precedents; his Organic Architecture is proved not earthbound, and he remains the most fertile and original architect of the United States.

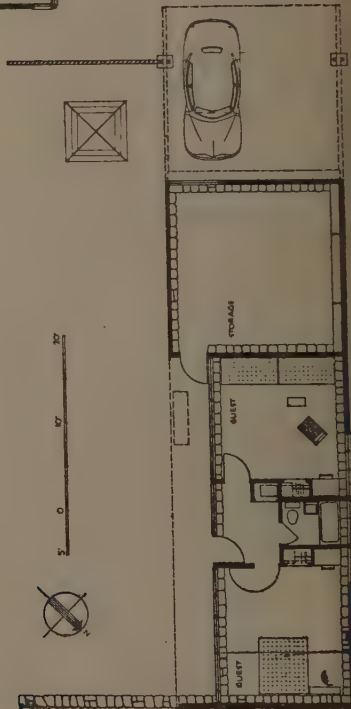
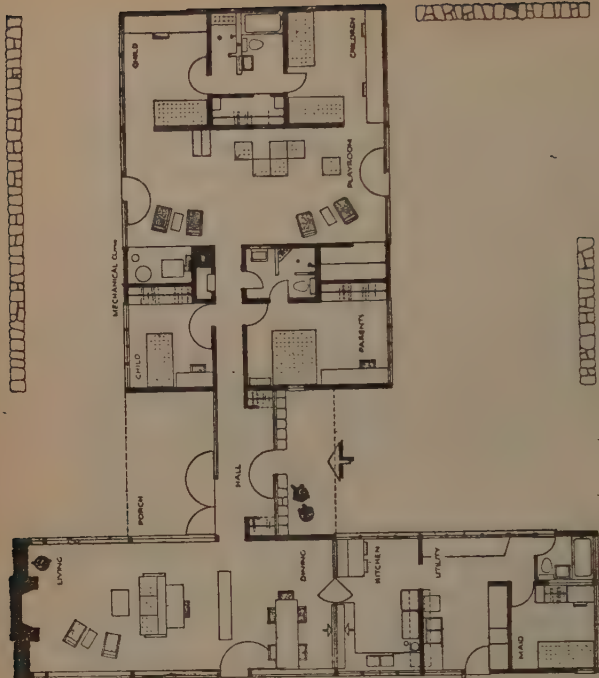
The Administration and Library Building by Mies van der Rohe (whose complete work is being shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York this autumn) is a principal unit of the campus he has designed for the Illinois Institute of Technology, where he heads the Department of Architecture. The campus, when complete, will have seventeen buildings designed and orientated by Mies and will be one of the major monuments of modern architecture in the world. The common practices of building, so daringly flouted in Wright's works, form the point of departure for Mies. Yet his is a long voyage from the usual uses of a steel cage, brick curtain walls, and metal sash, to the perfected precision of the building illustrated. Plan articulates the forms of Wright's and Breuer's works, but it is structure that articulates each detail of the Mies building. He finds beauty in fastidious proportions and nice joints, and abides by rectangles disposed with monumental symmetry. Monumentality is emphasized by

the great scale of the building, whose bays are just three times as large as the usual ones—sixty-four by twenty-four feet. It is hard to realize that the glass panes over the doorways will be the largest sheets in this country—eighteen feet high—and that on entering, a visitor will face a space 200 feet by 200 feet and thirty feet high with only a dozen free-standing columns in sight. This serene building has as its foci of interest a small quiet inner garden court and two large balconies, one of which shows on the west elevation drawing, while the other is cantilevered over the entrance lobby. The impeccable performance of each of the structural elements, the mastery with which they are juxtaposed, the harmonious command of shape and space, make this design a great deed of virtuosity and an exemplar of reticence, thoroughness and clarity.

Marcel Breuer's recent house on Long Island for the Geller family is an ambitious and often perplexing work by a man who, after having been a leading architect in Germany, Switzerland and England, has become one of America's best-known architects. Breuer has combined in this house the brilliance of the Bauhaus planning methods with the spread-out characteristics of the American ranch house. As the Swiss critic, Dr. Sigfried Giedion, puts it, 'Breuer has become thoroughly Americanized'.

The basic characteristic of the Geller plan is its 'zone' arrangement. The entrance is in the middle of the composition on a sort of bridge between two rectangles that are placed perpendicular to each other. To the right of the entrance are the sleeping apartments and the children's room and playroom, isolated to prevent disturbance to the activities in the main part of the house. The main block contains the servants' wing at one end and, isolated at the other, the living room, with windows on both sides. Articulation in planning can be carried no further. Every function is succinctly expressed in the plan.

On the exterior, the composition is dominated by an extremely long reverse shed roof line. The matched board siding of oiled cedar makes a pleasant vernacular appearance which contrasts with the crisp symmetrical window divisions and bright red doors. The one-story zoned, articulated plan was first introduced by Breuer some ten years ago and has since been much admired. It may well become the prototype for many suburban houses in the next decade.



Plan of Geller House, Lawrence, Long Island

Architect: MARCEL BREUER. 1946

A photograph of the Geller House
appears facing page 67.



Photograph by Ben Schnall

The Modern Gallery: bequest of Solomon R. Guggenheim. Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y.

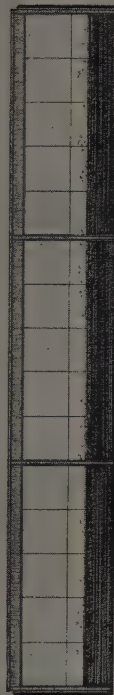
View of model at night. Architect: FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT. 1945



Sports Club for Huntington Hartford, Hollywood Hills, California



SOUTH ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION

Proposed Library and Administration Building, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, Ill.
Elevations. Architect: MIES VAN DER ROHE. 1944



Geller House, Lawrence, Long Island
View of front drive and front of house. *Archited.*: MARCEL BREUER. 1946

Photograph by Ezra Stoller

E. E. CUMMINGS

POEM

to start, to hesitate; to stop
(kneeling in doubt: while all
skies fall) and then to slowly trust
T upon H, and smile—

could anything be pleasanter
(some big dark little day
which seems a lifetime at the least)
except to add an A?

henceforth he feels his pride involved
(this i who's also you)
and nothing less than excellent
E will exactly do

next (our great problem nearly solved)
we dare adorn the whole
with a distinct grandiloquent
deep D; while all skies fall

at last perfection, now and here
—but look: not sunlight? yes!
and (plunging rapturously up)
we spill our masterpiece

PART III

CIRCLES AND STRESSES

AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

JOE ALSOP

THE process of making American foreign policy is highly idiosyncratic and excessively complex. Persons of European training invariably have great difficulty in understanding it; and if understanding dawns upon them, they rarely manage not to be shocked by political methods so eccentrically unconventional. Not a few imitate the example of a high official of the British Foreign Office, who survived the rigours of a tour of duty in Washington by using the Coué system, almost audibly muttering, whenever the spectacle of the American Government pressed itself upon his reluctant attention: 'It isn't there; it isn't there; it isn't there; it really can't be true'. Even among Americans, only those specially interested follow the labyrinthine interaction of relationships between the White House, the Congress and the public, the national history, the facts of geography and the march of world events, from which American policy is customarily elaborated.

For these reasons, there is an almost universal tendency to think of American foreign relations in terms of the past, and to ignore the great changes of the last six years. And only these changes make it possible, although by no means certain, that the United States will now pursue an international policy as positive, as integrated and as forehanded as the grim facts of the post-war world grimly and insistently demand.

Why such a policy was impossible in the past—why the greatest of American leaders, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, could never lead but always had to jockey and to play the artful dodger through the whole pre-war period—may be crudely grasped in terms of a single episode. At the end of the Congressional session of 1939, the Senate would have moved to repeal the Neutrality Act as a warning to Hitler, if the Senate could have been convinced that

war really threatened. The issue was tense; Senator Guy C. Gillette of Iowa let it be known that he had spent a whole night upon his knees, asking the Almighty to give the answer. But in this instance, the Almighty possessed less influence than Senator William E. Borah of Idaho. Borah, almost single-handed, convinced the Senate and Senator Gillette that there would be no war. In a final effort to secure action Roosevelt called Borah and other leading Senators of both parties to a night meeting at the White House, where he and Cordell Hull, with deep seriousness and in full detail, described the dreadful danger then hanging over the whole world.

At the close of Hull's presentation, Borah coolly informed the Secretary of State that he had little respect for the judgement of the State Department; that he was in the habit of collecting his own information, and that sources which could be absolutely relied upon had given assurance war would not come. The gathering broke up in some embarrassment, for the aging Hull, confronted with the intransigence of his former colleague, wept tears of anger, frustration and foreboding. Shortly thereafter, when the incident at the White House became known, one of the writers ventured to ask Borah precisely what these sources of information of his might be. Borah answered with perfect complacency, that in order to avoid being duped by the State Department's wiles, he had taken a \$2.50 subscription to the British newsletter *The Week*. It was, he remarked, most useful, and it had convinced him unshakably that the Chamberlain Government planned another Munich over Poland. On being informed that *The Week* was edited by Claud Cockburn, a member of the British Communist Party, he showed no more than polite interest.

Now Borah was neither petty, nor stupid, nor evil. He exercised an evil influence on American foreign relations, but as an individual he had stature, courage and patriotism. His influence belied his character for a very simple reason: he summed up, in the most intense possible manner, the two Congressional traits which virtually forbade a coherent American foreign policy until the outbreak of the Second World War. These were a defiant Congressional independence of the executive, going so far that the average member preferred remaining ignorant to accepting information about world affairs from executive sources; and an equally defiant provincialism, so extreme in Borah's case

that he refused to travel abroad, on the ground that travel would sully the purity of his judgement as the Senate's leading expert on foreign affairs. Both traits are understandable by anyone who has known or studied the earlier America. The provincialism was rooted in the happy, unthinking security which was the lot of the dominant American middle class before depression and war shattered the pattern. The Congressional suspicion of the executive was the inevitable outcome of the American separation of legislative and executive powers.

Those who now seek to estimate the future of American foreign policy must grasp two all-important facts. First, these traits have ceased to be dominant. Every sensible American feels a natural nostalgia for the simpler past, when the national responsibilities were so much less burdensome and obtrusive. But the Second World War has at last driven home to the great majority the lesson that rejecting responsibility is the most costly folly. Equally, every member of Congress retains a natural dislike for the vast and mysterious executive branch. But the Second World War has also initiated a great constitutional change, causing a bridge to be built at last between the executive and the legislature. The symbol of this change is the bi-partisan foreign policy. In essence, this is merely a device by which the President and the State Department, by treating Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg of Michigan and Senator Tom Connally of Texas as the delegates of the Senate, are enabled to communicate confidentially, consult regularly, and reach decisions jointly with the Congressional branch. As to the second vital fact, it is very simple: although the traits of political provincialism and Congressional suspicion have ceased to be dominant, they have not utterly vanished away. These facts are the key to the otherwise puzzling American reactions to the world situation, from the end of the war to date.

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Despite the false impression spread abroad by the interested among the ignorant, Roosevelt had already decided, before the European war ended, to adopt a national policy such as has now been developed by Harry S. Truman, James F. Byrnes, Arthur H. Vandenberg and George C. Marshall. Months before Roosevelt's death, the phrase, 'Lend-Lease for Peace' had become common currency in the closed circle of the White House; and the phrase meant approximately the sort of thing already being undertaken

in Greece and Turkey and projected in the Marshall plan for Europe. Furthermore, Roosevelt had reached his decision to launch this programme, difficult, costly and unpopular *per se*, because he clearly understood that a world contest had begun between the Western and Soviet societies.

Yalta, and the immediate and flagrant breach of the Soviet Union's Yalta commitments in Rumania, were the real turning points for Roosevelt. Hitherto, while thoroughly aware of the nature of the Soviet system, he had at least accepted the war-time *cliché* that 'Stalin's word could be relied on'. Thereafter, in his own narrow circle, he made it quite plain that his patience was exhausted, and that firmness was to be the keynote of his future dealings with the Kremlin. He interpreted the Yalta terms quite literally; and far from accepting the extension of the Soviet Empire into Eastern Europe as an irreversible *fait accompli*, he meant to insist that Stalin eventually keep his Yalta promises of independence for Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary. The last State paper he completed was a stinging draft message to the Soviet dictator on the Polish question. The draft was communicated to Winston Churchill, who described it as 'weighty and eloquent'. And in other messages to Churchill during these last months, Roosevelt repeatedly mentioned his 'disillusion' with the Soviets, and indicated he had revised his policy in the light of the proof that Stalin's word was as much subordinated to *real politik* as anything else in the Soviet Union.

It is interesting to speculate upon what might have happened if illness had not so tragically overtaken the great President. On the one hand, his wretchedly bad relations with Congress (which he never managed well) would certainly have resulted in a major constitutional crisis, revolving around the issue of foreign policy, and beginning almost instantly after the Japanese surrender. On the other hand, his prestige abroad was so immense that he might have achieved successes at the conference table which have been beyond the powers of Truman, Byrnes, Vandenberg and Marshall. One thing only is certain. If he had lived he would shortly have become the same villain in the pages of *Pravda* that he had been in the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact.

It is indicative of the restraints upon Roosevelt's policy-making that at the time of his death, his underlying purposes and frame of mind had not even been communicated to his Vice-President.

Harry Truman first learned where matters stood after taking office, at a solemn session with Harry L. Hopkins and the then Secretaries of State, War and Navy. His immediate response was an effort to do as Roosevelt would have done. This was the intention behind his brutal lecture to Molotov on Poland, delivered when the Soviet Foreign Minister called at the White House *en route* to the San Francisco Conference. But Truman was not Roosevelt. Neither the Congress nor the public was then prepared to support a strong policy, and above all to make the grants of funds and authority without which strong words were only so much wind. Thus Truman's accession inevitably ushered in a new era of policy-making, first clearly signalized by the shockingly ill-considered termination of lend-lease.



The central fact with which the unfortunate Truman had to deal was the reality (as distinguished from the long-fostered public illusion) of Soviet policy. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that in the United States, as elsewhere, the Soviet political choices determined all other political choices from the time of the surrender of Germany onwards. The United States, like Britain, honestly desired no more than equal partnership in the task of building a working world organization. Indeed, from lack of hard experience, Americans placed greater reliance on the United Nations as a permanent panacea, than did the peoples of Britain or Western Europe. American attention was only diverted from the task of world organization by the most forcible and insistent Soviet challenges. And such phenomena as the Kremlin's naked power-grabs at the peace table and open aggression in Iran were at first optimistically attributed, even by the State Department, to simple bad manners, and only accepted as the challenges they were with quite agonized reluctance and after long delay.

Even before the victory over Japan, however, the reality of Soviet policy was beginning to emerge. Already the Soviets had begun to retreat from every instrumentality of international collaboration except the United Nations itself, and to work against the establishment of new instrumentalities. Already those who were informed could predict how the Soviets would employ their veto in the Security Council, and how they would respond to the vital effort to close the scientists' Pandora's box by

stituting international control of atomic energy. And this withdrawal from collaboration was only one aspect of the Soviet policy. The other was a campaign to exploit post-war chaos by capturing all possible strategic points within reach of their military power or political infiltration. With each passing month, both aspects of Soviet policy manifested themselves more strongly.

In judging Truman's performance in this period, certain allowances must be made. He still suffered from a strong personal provincialism, and he was confronted with a country and a Congress labouring under the delusion that normal conditions could soon be restored in the world. This is the explanation of his major mistakes, such as the termination of lend-lease. At the same time, he took such positive steps as were politically feasible, insisting on the maximum relief appropriations and the most generous British loan that Congress could be induced to approve; backing Byrnes in his development of the new attitude of 'patience and firmness' towards the Soviets; and unhesitatingly making the crucial decision to extend the strongest moral and political support to Britain in such episodes as the squabble over Tripolitania and the Iranian crisis. What he did may be summed up as an effort to meet the Soviet challenges by a policy of limited liabilities.

Unavoidably, while his policy was one of limited liabilities, Truman relied on Britain to do the rest of the job. In all key regions of Europe and Asia except Germany, China, Korea and Japan, the Americans were not on the spot, whereas the British were. Everywhere, the Soviet frontal assault was directed against positions of greater immediate interest to Britain than to the United States. These practical facts strengthened the habits of thought and action implanted by the previous six years. From 1939 onwards, measures universally acknowledged to be desirable had repeatedly not been attempted, because Congress would not stand for them. And, very roughly speaking, what Congress had not stood for, the British had regularly undertaken. Roosevelt and Churchill had even come perilously close to conspiring to accomplish certain purposes behind Congress's large, obstinate, ignorant collective back. This was all very well during the war. And in the year or so after the war, Truman's version of the system at least prevented any major disaster. But the obvious and ominous fact remained: Britain was being asked to carry a share

of the joint burden which was both unfair and—what was worse—totally disproportionate to her war-depleted resources.

It was curious, in these first eighteen post-war months, to talk to leading American officials. Intellectually, they were aware that a larger share of the burden would ultimately have to be carried by the United States. Emotionally, they avoided the implications of their own awareness, partly by habit, and partly in fear of the domestic political difficulties of the future. But this mood could not last. It was abruptly shattered by the decision of the British Cabinet, in February 1947, to liquidate Britain's economic commitments in Greece and Turkey.

This was the end of the policy of limited liabilities. It forced upon Truman and those around him a clear choice, between passively accepting the eventual absorption of Greece and Turkey into the Soviet sphere, with all the far-reaching consequences of this event; or launching an active and positive American policy, unlimited in liability, and involving very great political and executive problems. The situation was so unprecedented that consternation briefly reigned in the Government offices. But Truman, who had learned much since he ordered the termination of lend-lease, is nothing if not courageous. Others were flustered; it was the President who saw that only one course was really open—to summon the Congressional leaders to the White House; to place the facts before them; and to ask them to approve a new American foreign policy.

This scene oddly paralleled the scene in 1939. Once again, the last word lay with a Republican; and by an irony of history, Vandenberg, who had inherited Borah's mantle and power, had actually entered the Senate with the conscious ambition to follow in the Idahoan's isolationist footsteps. As in 1939, there was a major obstacle to be surmounted, and whereas the obstacle to the Senate's considering revision of the neutrality act had merely been the members' longing for the recess, the obstacle in 1947 was something far more formidable: taking over the British commitments in Greece and Turkey first of all demanded the appropriation of funds, and the Republican majority in Congress was politically committed to economy and tax reduction. As in 1939, the President and the Secretary of State first presented the broad problem, and these presentations were then followed by general discussion among all the participants in the White House

meeting. But despite these similarities of circumstance, how different was the outcome! The facts were not dodged; they were faced. The decision was not shirked; it was made—made glumly and reluctantly, but made none the less. From this moment dates the transition towards the first integrated American foreign policy, covering all phases of external relations, constructive in purpose, positive in method, unified by well-understood principles, and agreed upon between the President, the Congress and the people.

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This was an event of the first magnitude, a major turning-point. In order to understand it, however, one must go behind the announcement of the so-called 'Truman doctrine' in the President's now famous message to Congress. In this message, Truman's frankness was distinctly tempered by expediency. Several of his advisers urged him to tell the Congress bluntly: 'The United States has an immense job to do all over the world'; and to request the broad grants of powers and appropriations of many billions of dollars so obviously needed for the American job. But this kind of blank check request would have aroused all the old prejudices, and dissolved national unity in embittered debate. Therefore the President asked only for the money and the powers needed for Greece and Turkey. Then, too, while he did not conceal—while he actually emphasized—the larger implications of the step he was proposing, he described these implications in language of a sharply anti-Soviet tone. The reason for this was simple; the method of Joe the Fat Boy ('I wants to make your flesh creep') is still about the only sure method of starting the cumbersome machinery of the American Government. But the total effect abroad, where American political necessities are not well understood, was inevitably to distort the President's aims and principles.

What happened at the White House meeting was, in fact, much more representative of these aims and principles than what the President said to Congress. Then the discussion was by no means limited to Greece and Turkey. On the contrary, the question debated by the President, his advisers and the Congressional leaders was whether to assume, on behalf of the United States, the heavy burden of world responsibility now inescapably imposed by geography, wealth, population and the shape of world affairs. And their decision was that the United States should cease

the fruitless effort to limit liabilities, and undertake the full task of a major Power. It is this, and not the so-called Truman doctrine, which makes these events so vitally important.

By inferring principles and aims from the White House meeting, and political methods from the message to Congress, it is possible to compose a fairly dependable synthetic picture of the future. Obviously the years ahead will demand American efforts and expenditures of many kinds in many areas. Each time a new situation calls for new action, whether in Western Europe, the Middle East or the Far East, there will be debate, hesitation and misery in Washington. But each time the administration, the Congress and the people will find there is no escape from the course upon which they have now embarked. And thus in the end, when the dust of the debate is settling, the necessary action will be taken.

In more precise terms, the United States is now committed to a foreign policy of minimum and maximum objectives. The minimum objective is to promote political and economic stability in all key areas of the world by the constructive employment of American resources; and thus to prevent further Soviet expansion. This much is obviously demanded by American, and, indeed, by British interests. The maximum objective is to promote a working world organization, capable of solving all international disputes by peaceful means. This is demanded by the true interests of all nations. And it is further considered that the only way to attain the maximum objective is to attain the minimum objective. The one is preparatory to the other.

To grasp why this is so one must understand the American analysis of Soviet policy. A working world organization is plainly impossible, so long as the Kremlin opposes international collaboration and desires Russian national expansion. This Soviet policy must be ultimately traced, however, to two sources: First, the Kremlin's suspicions of the outer world are continually aroused by the five competing intelligence nets disclosed by the Canadian Royal Commission's investigations; by the reports of Soviet embassies, shown by wartime intercepts to be simple rehashes of *Daily Worker* editorials; and by the fevered reports to the Comintern from local Communist Parties. Secondly, the Kremlin's appetites as well as fears are deeply stirred by the doctrines of the holy books. All that is not Soviet is capitalist.

According to the Scriptures, all that is capitalist is doomed to class war, to chaos and to imperialist struggle. And the impulse to expand derives both from the itch to take advantage of the chaos, and the itch to build bulwarks against it. Thus, by mingled cupidity and cowardice, have the founders of great empires generally been driven onwards.

But the fact that greed and fear were, for example, the dominant motives of the Roman Senate's Eastern Mediterranean policy, does not alter the fact that there is a genuine misunderstanding between the Soviets and the non-Soviet world, and the further fact that Soviet policy is based upon this misunderstanding. In such circumstances, two alternatives are always open. In the United States, as in Britain, many have pleaded for appeasement. But the more practical alternative has been chosen; the American choice has been to make the falsity of the Soviet assumptions so abundantly plain, so impossible to explain away, that misunderstanding could no longer persist.

This choice was in reality made during the Iranian crisis. Henry Wallace and the others like him then frantically pleaded for 'sympathy' for the Soviets, and indignantly denounced 'ruthless British imperialism', much in the language of R. H. S. Crossman talking about the United States today. The Kremlin obviously expected the Wallace viewpoint to prevail; the scriptures said that 'imperialist rivalry' was the controlling factor in relations between capitalist nations, and thus, since Britain was considered no less capitalist than America, the first phase of Soviet policy was based on the expectation of an immediate falling out between Britain and the United States. But these expectations were disappointed. After some hesitation, Truman and Byrnes took the crucial decision to reject appeasement, which would have been largely at Britain's expense, and must have led either to war or an immediate catastrophic alteration in the world balance of power. At that moment the principles, although not the eventual range, of the American policy were determined. These principles are to promote political and economic stability by positive efforts throughout the world; to let the Kremlin learn the untruth of its agents' and representatives' reports from the progress of events; and to rely on hard and irremovable facts to exhibit the hollowness of the holy books. In the opinion of the makers of American policy, determined implementation of these principles

must eventually induce a change in Soviet policy. And it is further hoped that if Soviet policy ever changes, the final goal of a working world organization may at last be attained, and its permanence may be assured by such almost irreversible steps as the establishment of world-wide machinery for atomic energy control.

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This American effort to promote economic prosperity and political stability entered its decisive phase with Marshall's speech at the Harvard commencement. (How surprised must have been those thronging dignitaries, robed and ranked and drowsing in the golden New England June, to hear something really *said* on such an occasion!) With Marshall's speech at Harvard, the administration took another, and a very long, step along the road marked out in the Iranian crisis, and embarked upon with the Greek-Turkish aid programme.

The step should, of course, have been taken before. But in March and April, it is curious but true that the leaders of the government did not grasp either the immediacy or the gravity of Europe's economic ills. They had been warned, despairingly, by British and European leaders. But the warnings had not told, had not registered effectively because—another survival from the simpler American past—the State Department lacked any true staff system. Its organization was essentially the same as in the days of John Quincy Adams; and having no machinery for the purpose, the Department failed to fit the facts of the European economic situation into a coherent and representative picture. Without such a picture before them, in turn, Truman and Marshall failed to realize how terrible a toll was being taken by the delay in post-war reconstruction, or how imminent was the danger of the world dollar shortage. It is tragic that these truths were not apparent to them. If they had known the truth, the Greek-Turkish aid programme would certainly have been presented in far more palatable form—as a subsidiary element in the larger framework of something similar to what is now called the Marshall plan.

The genesis of the Marshall plan itself may be traced to three events. First, even before his departure from Moscow, Secretary Marshall began his triumphant campaign to bring order out of the State Department's antique chaos. Thus the facts began to be gathered together, to be correlated, and to be fitted into the

coherent picture that had not previously been available. Second, the facts themselves, by becoming more ominous, became also more insistent in their demand for attention. And third, Marshall at Moscow passed through an important personal experience, from which he emerged, no longer a strategist-administrator, but (if the worn old word still retains any meaning) a full-fledged statesman. On his return from Moscow, he and his staff reviewed the situation together. Action was immediately decided upon in principle, with the strong encouragement of President Truman. Some weeks elapsed while various modes of action were debated back and forth. And in the end, Marshall at Harvard invited the nations of Europe to join hands together, and to plan their common reconstruction with the resources of the United States to underwrite their deficits.

As a result, the final test of the stability of American foreign policy is now immediately ahead. As these words are written, many hurdles must still be got over before the Marshall plan can be offered to Congress in concrete form. European agreement is still being sought. The timing and the tactics of the approach to Congress are still being discussed. Yet there is no doubt that Congress will, in fact, be approached. And equally, there is no doubt that if Congress and the country approve the Marshall plan, with its requirement for heavy expenditures over a long period, it will no longer be necessary to fear American turnings-back. A commitment will then have been made, which will be binding upon any future administration, whatever its character.

It is natural for any British student of affairs, as for any American, to ask at this point: 'But will Congress really make the commitment?' Here one is reduced to consulting the sensitive elbow, the faintly inflamed toe, or whatever other organ most helpfully predicts the unknown climate of the future. Strangely enough, the last Congressional session closed with the situation still completely fluid. The vast majority of members disliked the notion of the Marshall plan, but this dislike was only another manifestation of the normal human distaste for disagreeable reality; and while any sensible person is incapable of finding pleasure in realities which are disagreeable, only the neurotics flee from them in the end. Some members of Congress will certainly try to flee, especially among the more conservative, who suffer acutely from a neurosis conspicuous in our time in all

countries—rich men's cowardice. It is a good rule, however, in political forecasting in America, to begin with the assumption that the country always saves itself somehow in the end. And since the Marshall plan represents the salvation of the United States, as well as of its more direct beneficiaries, it is reasonable to assume that after much sound and fury, much rather hysterical debate, much agonizing delay, the plan will pass.

If this forecast is correct, the United States will shortly be committed to total implementation of the principles of foreign policy set forth above. In practice, however, the very best intentions can always be defeated by faulty execution. And it is precisely the quality of execution of national foreign policy, rather than its principles and purposes, which worries sensible Americans. Without the more mobile and experienced British as their partners, the American people, with their cumbersome government and their remaining nostalgia for an easier past, can hardly hope to complete the job they have now undertaken. And even with the British linked to them in partnership; even if, as is inevitable, we elaborate the idea of the Marshall plan and extend it to other areas, we shall still fall occasionally into the errors of too little and too late.

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Thus the future of American foreign policy is seen, in the final analysis, to depend on the rate of acceleration of two widely separated contemporary processes. The race itself is between the sequence of events abroad resulting in political and economic deterioration all over the world; and the sequence of events in the United States leading to political awakening. If the present half-measures do not succeed in staving off world economic and political collapse until the American awakening permits action on a larger and more adequate scale, the race will be lost. But with each passing month, the administration, the Congress and the country increasingly recognize that half-measures will no longer suffice for carrying out the American job. In such a situation, the outcome—total destruction or planned prosperity—is completely unpredictable. And it is this element of complete uncertainty which makes the present so agonizing a moment in history.

THE DISAPPEARING CENTRE: NOTES ON BOSTON AND CAMBRIDGE

WILLIAM ABRAHAMS

ONE might begin by mentioning Boston's climate, violent with what the poet John Wheelwright called Siberian winter, April dung storms, and the sweaty tropical summers. Then a word about the politics—'crooked'; a consideration of the people: the remnant of 'old families' withdrawn to contemplation in their Bulfinch houses on Beacon Hill; the overwhelming majority of Irish-Catholics, creating for the city a new version of Puritanism—the refusal, for example, to permit the spread of birth-control information; a fig-leaf censorship of books and theatre, coexisting with a tolerated (one is tempted to say, admired) 'civic malfeasance' and a sluttish bawdry in the bagnios and burlesque houses. This is American enough; but if one were to seek out a European apposite, one would describe the tone as Irish. Dubliners feel at home here. Joyce would decamp immediately, after one horrified glance of recognition; De Valera, on the other hand, might find himself elected Mayor. Add to this the vast complex of self-governing suburbs which surround the city, so that it is possible to say that no one actually 'lives' in Boston. To compile a list of resident writers would mean Dos Passos in Provincetown, Conrad Aiken in Brewster, Edmund Wilson in Wellfleet, J. P. Marquand in Newburyport, Bernard DeVoto in Cambridge, etc.

That Boston, in these circumstances, keeps a reputation as a Literary Centre is of interest chiefly to the anthropologist—one finds here the Illustrious Past, like a discredited magic, forced to do service for the Lack-lustre Present. The ceremony convinces no one, certainly not those who participate in it, but it is persisted in, if only because in Boston ceremony still counts for a great deal. Even ardent Bostonians must have their uneasy moments of scepticism; for those less ardent, the facts are too appallingly at hand.

The chief literary event of the season is an Annual Book Fair, sponsored by the *Boston Herald*. Before an audience of high-school girls and earnest clubwomen, a bizarre assortment of 'literary talent' is assembled at Symphony Hall: lady experts

on the art of charm; foreign correspondents; cartoonists; even a novelist or two. Exactly what purpose the occasion serves no one, least of all its newspaper sponsor, has been able publicly to define. Yet it has to be mentioned. There is nothing else: no forums, no writers' groups, no lectures, no little magazines, no societies for mutual admiration, no hideout-café for the intelligentsia.

The most imposing literary real estates in the city are the publishing houses of Little, Brown, and Houghton Mifflin; and the monthly magazine, *The Atlantic*. Each has its Distinguished Nineteenth-Century History, and each has its contemporary success. The relation to Boston is largely a matter of geography. Manner is zealously preserved: bearded memorial portraits, a cult of Good Breeding, the English accent and the English afternoon tea; but these are surface illusions. The product—I mean, simply, the work published—is the New York product. To expect anything else would be naïve: these institutions are national in scope, national in their interests, couldn't survive if they were not to subscribe wholeheartedly to the national ethos. But for Boston's writers, the trio might as usefully be in Chicago or San Francisco.

And there are writers in the area, they do exist, even thrive. It is easy enough to discover reasons. The city has its advantages: libraries, museums, bookshops, concerts; what, in short, New York has to offer, if in less distracting and narcotic abundance. It has a traditional architecture; a sense of the past. Even the violent climate has unexpected felicities: the smoky haze at sunset; the evocative nights when fog rolls off the harbour and drifts and curls through the crooked streets. Most useful, in the end, is the Indifference. Here writers are left severely alone; they must work out their own salvation.

At Harvard, the University in Cambridge, across the Charles River, the picture reverses itself. Unity, coherence, organization, are the key words: they signify the fully accoutred Literary Centre, with its astral and satellite figures, its serious forums, serious little magazines, and serious delicious intrigues. Everything is present except, ironically, the major achievement. For undergraduate writers this turns out to be a peculiarly fecund atmosphere; for those who stay on it is testimony to what poets and Freudians knew from the beginning: the womb is always the tomb.

That Harvard is our outstanding University is amply proved

by the literary tradition. I do not propose a tiresome documentation; it suffices, as instance, to note that in the decade preceding the First World War, Eliot, Aiken, Dos Passos, Hillyer and Cummings were undergraduates. Perhaps it is youth which works to the undergraduates' advantage: a youthful ability to profit from what is alive, to ignore what is dead. Harvard's chief asset, in this respect, is its Disinterestedness, a cultural climate remarkably untainted by materialism, a quality inexactly but comprehensively described as 'civilization'. Maturity on the part of the undergraduate writer is taken for granted; no narrow vulgar collegiate standard is prescribed. If he should choose to school himself at the Grolier Bookshop on Plympton Street rather than the classrooms at Sever Hall, it is his own affair.

The present University administration, regrettably, prefers to undervalue an 'attitude' so difficult to define—in the Halls of Congress, for example—and advances nervously to that Passion for the Useful which has blighted so much 'higher education' in the United States. An atomic physicist, so the logic runs, is more useful to Society than a poet; therefore, what with one thing and another and the prospect of Federal Aid (interference?) the poets must go. One anticipates for this policy at best an equivocal success—poets are persistent; besides, other universities, less encumbered than Harvard by the quirky and civilized, can build larger laboratories, larger cyclotrons, achieve the monstrous utilitarian Absolute.

There remains to be said something about literary activity on the part of the faculty. In view of 'The Cost of Letters' in the United States (*cf.* HORIZON, September 1946) it is hardly to be wondered at that so many writers accept the University as the least objectionable compromise; but they find themselves, all too soon, victims of its insidious smother-tactics. How often one encounters them at faculty cocktail parties, the men in the bitter thirties, with the promising first novel, or the promising first book of poems behind them, and the unwritten successor tactfully unmentioned. What has happened to the promise? It has been bled out; by the exhausting teaching schedules; by a nerve-racking compulsion to appease the Scholastics; by the fritillary intrigues of the Sensitives; by a final destructive transfer of belief: that the University is Life, that outside is nothing, or something it is safer not to touch. Remembering these hazards

one can only praise the few men at Harvard who manage to keep writing: the poets, Theodore Morrison, Delmore Schwartz, and Theodore Spencer; the critics, F. O. Matthiessen, and Harry Levin. It is from them that Cambridge takes its quality as a Literary Centre.

But why speak of Literary Centres in the United States now? With Hemingway in Cuba, Faulkner in Mississippi, Dos Passos in Massachusetts, Jeffers in California, Frost in Florida, and Stevens in Connecticut, the discovery of A, B, and C still holding hands in New York, or X, Y, and Z, morris-dancing in Cambridge, is less than persuasive. The truth is that American writers write best in America, and alone, which is sufficient to explain the dispersal of talent through the forty-eight States. Serious American writers haven't thrived in the past, don't thrive now, on the intrigues and calculations of the coteries. The *cher confrère* is unknown here. If Longfellow and Russell Lowell were neighbours, James found it necessary to dispatch his letters to Howells in New York from Lamb House. 'We work in the dark'; and it might be added that our source is life—not the Literary Life.

SINGLE HARVEST

DONALD WINDHAM

THE new Greyhound bus which he was to have taken was full, and Hubert found a seat in the ramshackle bus which caught the overflow. Bitter, gaunt and lean, dressed in a green shirt, a thin striped tie, and the cheap double-breasted business suit he had worn all though the week of his mother's death and funeral, he sat next to the window. The funeral had exhausted and depressed him, but he could not yet feel any loss. He could only look at the autumn landscape through a haze of sentiment.

Northward, the bus rattled along the dirt road out of the town and on to the highway, past decaying houses of wood and stone which also return to dust, through fields burned bare by the summer in spite of evergreen pine trees, black barns, and orange sagebrush, into small towns where thin people ambled before identical War-Between-the-States monuments. In childhood, the courthouse squares of small towns had suggested a past rich in

gentility and tradition. Hubert tried to feel it now. He was a poet, and had written that the flesh must become granite, the heart stone; but he tried to feel as much as possible.

Halfway to Atlanta, the bus drew up in the dust of the highway before a small town lunch and magazine store for a ten-minute rest stop. He clambered out of the bus and stood in the dust drinking a Coca-Cola. Across the road large wooden houses stretched behind wide lawns as far as he could see. Behind the bus, on the parallel street, red brick stores stood in a line with corrugated tin roofs shading the sidewalk and dark interiors. And between the two roads, a block away, the windowed and domed roof of another courthouse was visible above the treetops. Hubert set the empty soda bottle on a wooden bench beside the store and re-entered the bus.

'There ain't nothing as beautiful as the country in fall,' said a dried old woman who had sat beside him.

Hubert, who could see his face in the driver's mirror, smiled at her.

'It is wonderful,' he said. 'It's simply wonderful.'

Then, when he had told her about his mother's funeral and the bus had circled the square and rattled down the highway again, all the depression which he had held back came forth, and he recalled his whole past as meaningless and petty. His life had been lived back and forth along this road. His mother's funeral had been held in the house in which he had been born. The yard, rich with decay, overgrown with weeds and wild flowers waist high, buzzing with flies, was the same in which he had hidden under the grape arbour as a child and listened to the loud voices of his father and mother inside. When the front door had slammed and his father left, he had run in through the kitchen and clutched his mother's skirts and cried. In the same parlour in which her coffin had lain she had comforted him and herself with long monologues on the good of all renunciation and the evil of all indulgence. He had not thought of himself as belonging to these distinctions then, had connected himself with the plants of the yard where there was no question of good and evil, no past and no future. He had imagined that he belonged not with cultivated flowers, but with those hardy weeds which survive after flowers have shattered. He thought of himself as a sapling in the winter wind, as a fruit fallen on a stony glade. These images, like

reflections in a mirror, had comforted him. But in his teens he was confronted with his mother's morality. Up this same road he had left home for the first time and come to stay with his father's family in Atlanta. Both he and his mother had too much pride and too much loathing to forgive each other their failings. The hand which gives the kindest caress, he had written, deals the cruellest blow. Faded, his mother's skin had been, even then, unwomanly, unmanly, like a boy's over her long limbs as she stood at the gate before the dark house and watched him, a tall small boy with white neck and eyes so bright in his pinched face that they seemed to burn, walk down the dirt road to the bend, turn and wave. While he waved she had lowered her arm, without bitterness but with great pride, wiped her moist palm upon her apron, turned back into the house and left him alone.

In Atlanta, his father's family had taken him in and treated him kindly, as though all the distinction and sensitivity of which he was so proud were weaknesses he would outgrow in time. Under fear of becoming as coarse as they, he had written a book of poems idealizing mother, childhood, and the country landscape. The book had won him a scholarship to a college in Florida. He had gone back down this highway again. Florida sand and Georgia clay. College had freed him and flattered him. It celebrated equally his talent and his lust: jazz music and girl poets: turtleneck sweaters and gin: a girl's voice asking 'Are you a Lesbian?' He had written a second book and come back to Atlanta at his publisher's expense to be interviewed over the radio (the whole world may be listening), to look at proofs of photographs over late breakfast in his hotel (people turned around and looked when he entered a room in those days), to write home letters which bathed his mother in reflected glory. In defiance he had written:

Behold in me, O land of sloth and sleep,
A single harvest which you shall not reap.

But the book had not sold. As the bus entered Atlanta, along Washington Avenue where a few brick stores had fallen among frame houses and thrived, Hubert asked himself what he had been doing in Atlanta for the last year, and incredulously answered that he had been working in the men's clothing section of a department store. That was how much this city appreciated him, and that was the best of a number of jobs he had endured. He looked

out at the street where the bus stopped in traffic, at the signs of palmists and tourists' homes, and he lamented that his ancestors had bothered to raise from the ashes a city which treated him so indifferently.

Hubert lived in other people, needing their approval. He admired the writings of women poets, and most of his permanent friends were women. Gwen was director of the Little Theatre. He went to tell her first about his mother's funeral. Gwen had a childish face and long, flat lips. She spoke with a lisp and did everything in a little-girl manner, whether it was serious or gay. She was not much past forty, and she looked not much past thirty, despite the fact that she had not been sober for more than twenty years. Behind a screen of continual rye she looked on a much simpler world. She was never given to excessive drinking as some people were, and she never became sober enough to despair and disgrace herself. Gwen admitted that the world was a place of hate and murder, even that the city was; but it seemed to her that the hope for the city or the world lay in individuals, in a few people like her friends who could get together. In winter she gave parties in her studio, in summer she organized picnics. Hubert called her the night he returned, and went with her on the last outdoor supper of the year.

The car turned from the Roswell Road at Sandy Springs and rode over the rise and fall of continually descending hills along the dirt road to Soap Creek. It passed several other cars, but the country was tranquil and deserted. The road was shadowed by many trees, and the floor of the woods was brown with pine-needles and dotted with golden-red leaves among the patches of sunlight which fell from the late sky.

Gwen parked the car by the covered bridge, constructed before the Civil War of heavy hand-hewn wood and secured by wooden pegs. The members of the picnic clambered out of the car and down the muddy slope of the hill toward the overgrown ruins of papermills extending alongside the yellowish waters of the creek. The path continued downstream beyond the bridge, but at the largest of the ruins the picnickers climbed the hill until they reached a mound parallel with the tops of trees growing in the shells of buildings below, from which they could look down on the ruins, the jutting brown rocks, and the rushing yellow waters.

'How about a little drinkie-pie?' Gwen said.

They had brought soda with the supper, but Gwen never drank water except with whiskey, and she never drank whiskey except with water, so she and Hubert started over the top of the hill to the mouth of a spring which trickled down to the creek.

'I mean, consider it not as my friend, but just from an ordinary viewpoint,' Hubert said. 'For all of last week they paid me only the one day I was there. What do they expect me to live on? They're out of their minds. I've had more expenses, not less. I didn't say anything to the manager, but, believe me, what those people who work in the store think would give him an earful. They know I'm right!'

'It's the meanest thing I ever heard of in all my life,' Gwen said.

'But don't worry. I have an idea for getting even with them. Just riding out here it occurred to me that there's no reason for me to stay in this town now. I think I'll just pack up and leave for New York this week-end without saying a word to them, and let them find out about it Monday morning. What do you think of that?'

'New York? Why it'd be wonderful. But, Hubert, honey, we'd miss you so.'

They had reached the pool of the spring, and Gwen had stooped down to fill a jar with the bubbling crystal liquid which rose from the round bed of leaves. Hands on his hips, Hubert stood over her waiting until she rose before he spoke again so he could see her reaction in her face. He had begun to feel elated, and he wanted to put his plan into action and into other people's lives.

'Seriously, I think I will,' he said. 'To make up your mind and go is the only way to do anything, and I think I'll do it.'

Gwen smiled as though it were all her idea.

'Just think, Monday morning at the store they're running around saying, "Where is Hubert?" And you're in New York, seeing Tallulah Bankhead and—'

'I'll have an opportunity of being appreciated there that I'll never have here, in the theatre, or on a magazine—'

'I think it's the thing to do, Hubert. Of course, I don't know what we'll do without you when we try to put on *The Trojan Women* with those Agnes Scott girls. But it'll be worth while the dreadfulness of it, thinking of you there in New York where you belong. . . .'

Gwen had started down the hill again, holding the jug of water before her. In his absorption, Hubert walked like a prophet behind her, playfully holding on to the belt of her dress, and chattering without offering to carry the jug. Gwen stepped bravely on stones through the mud as she made her way downhill. Hubert followed in her footsteps; he hated mud. When they came in sight of the others, he ran ahead waving and shouting:

‘Everybody, listen to this! What do you think I’m going to do? I’m going to pack up and leave, this week-end, and go to New York to live. Just like that!’

The picnic consisted of several young men and women who worked with Gwen in the Little Theatre, a girl who sang in a local Episcopal choir, and a college boy who admired Hubert’s verse. Everyone met Hubert’s announcement with excitement, and it formed the main topic of discussion the rest of the evening with only two interruptions. The first came when Gwen mixed the first drink. As she poured the spring water into the amber whiskey, the mixture in the white paper cup was pale green and veined with dark threads. She shrieked, and everyone gathered round to look. Gwen was afraid to have a drink till Hubert mixed another, which came out clear, and after sipping a little announced that it tasted simply wonderful. They all laughed and went on drinking, but every few minutes someone would remember the way the first drink had looked, pale green and streaming with threads, and break out laughing again.

The second time, after they had eaten and it was dark, they went down to the stream holding hands, took off their shoes and socks and went wading. The rocks were slippery and precarious. Almost drunk, they felt their way cautiously along till the girl who sang in the choir slipped and fell. Hubert tried to pick her up, but when he found that she was not hurt he dropped her again and started laughing while she sat in the water and shrieked:

‘Here I am all wet, and I’ve got to sing the Lord’s Prayer at midnight.’

Hubert lived in a garage apartment behind a boarding house. The stone roof of the garage extended beyond the wooden structure upon it, and formed a terrace of iron-grey stone. The landlady had given Hubert a glider to use upon the terrace, and he

liked living over the garage. It gave him privacy and a place to entertain. Both were necessary. During the week as he prepared for his departure he was away from the apartment a great deal, but he always returned home late at night. His friends were in the habit of coming to see him whenever they liked, dropping in with no warning, and if he wanted to be alone he had to pull down the shade and become quiet as soon as he heard someone coming up the walk. Voices from the apartment could be heard outside, and lying in bed Hubert could hear the voices of the negroes in the servants' quarters across the cobblestone alley behind. All the week he paid no attention to work, either at the store or at home where he usually spent some time at his poems. The complexity of life increased, and with it his spirits. Moving about, seeing people, making love, dissipating, did not tire him the way continence and work did. He saw friends and the lovers of friends, separately or together, and the more he practised deception the more miraculously easy it became. At night, he could hardly remember the pattern of his day without laughing at it. The happier he felt the more he devoted his time to remaining happy. When he was in New York, he told himself, he would return to schedule and to work. But now he did not see any reason to act other than he was acting. He seemed to walk on air. His head was held higher, his mind moved effortlessly over the surface of events. Every time he doubted his beauty, he proved it. It occurred to him that all ugly things were hateful, and that people who dwelled on their misfortunes were simply emotionally stingy. He told this to a nice woman who had sometimes helped him financially and to whom he had dedicated some of his more recent poems, and she agreed with him.

He saved the announcement to his employers at the store that he was leaving till Saturday afternoon. They actually offered him a rise to stay, and it brightened his mood immensely to be able to refuse. It was not merely a question of the money, he said, but that he wanted to get a job which was worthy of his abilities. This amazed them to the point that they suggested there might be something for him in the advertising department. But he informed them that his mind was made up, and handed in his resignation.

Saturday night a few people dropped in before supper, and he went out to eat with them. They came back afterwards with a

bottle and started what turned out to be a regular party. More and more people dropped in, and before the evening was over the neighbours had called the police and complained about *that fraternity house across the street where the boys are making all the noise*. After that they went downtown to Thompson's for eggs or doughnuts and coffee. It was so late when they had eaten that they hurried home. The police had a way of asking anyone out late where he was going, and no matter what he replied, answering: "That's what you think; you're going to the station". This cost ten dollars. One of the boys who lived at Oglethorpe missed his last trolley and he spent the night with Hubert over the garage. Sunday morning faded in empty and quiet. Hubert went back to bed after the boy left and slept.

An acorn fell and bounced along the stones of the terrace. Beyond the terrace and the oaktree and the cobblestone alley, the frame houses and dead leaves which lined the side street were saturated with autumn sunlight; the phoenix seemed to have some meaning, waiting for the start of the blaze from whose ashes it would arise, watching with covetous eyes the latent bonfires. Overhead, sun-drenched clouds sped rapidly across the sky and the trees swayed in the wind, dropping leaves and acorns.

Hubert walked from the glider to the end of the terrace, and back to the glider again. His serenity was gone. He was all indignant emotion. His mind moved back and forth, but it always returned to one fact. The high-school boy sitting on the glider before him had come to the house and introduced himself, saying that he was an admirer of Hubert's poetry and hoped he would autograph a copy of his book for him. He said that they had an acquaintance in common, but this person had refused to introduce him, saying that although Hubert was a good poet, he was not the sort of person the boy would want to know.

Hubert smiled and turned back to the glider where he had commanded the boy to sit in the sun and talk to him.

'I love the sun,' he said. 'I may be too dissolute for people to introduce you to, but I haven't lost the appreciation of simple pleasures. I still get a kick out of sitting in the sun, or putting on a clean shirt just back from the laundry. Of course, I don't pretend that that's all I do. Last night I couldn't sleep and I counted up all the people I've been to bed with and it was more than—well,

I won't tell *you* how many. But a lot. I felt so sordid. But then I began to think what sort of person I'd be if I hadn't—'

He broke off in a peal of artificial laughter and saw that the boy was listening intently.

—Why, I'd be the worst sort of depressed person with a dried-up face like this. . . . I'd be a Y.M.C.A. secretary writing poems to the gym. No, what I've done has been right. And behind it all, do you know what there has been? A seeking for the innocence and purity of childhood again. It's there in all my work, in my preoccupation with youth and the past. Not that I'm so old, or that I look as old as I am. I was mistaken for nineteen at Silver Lake last week. It's incredible, but it's true. How old *do* you think I am?'

Hubert put his foot on the glider and leaned over, looking at the boy with his narrow, close-set eyes. The boy smiled, and did not answer. Here is a fine, intelligent person whose acquaintance the petty, horrible people in this town would have denied me, he thought. Suddenly, he said:

'I just want to tell you this, and then we won't mention it any more. I went down to the country last week and buried my mother.'

The boy was embarrassed.

'Oh, I'm sorry.'

'We won't mention it,' Hubert said, holding up his hand. 'I just thought you'd want me to tell you. We've just met, but I can tell you that you are a sympathetic and intelligent person, and would want to know that something like that has just happened.'

The boy said that he was sorry Hubert was leaving Atlanta just as they had met, and that he would not get to know him.

'Well, you can do me a favour,' Hubert said. 'You can tell your friend, whoever it is, and I think I know, that the only *decent* people in this town are my friends and are glad to introduce any of their friends to me. That attitude, however, is just what I ought to know to expect by now. And I'm glad I'm leaving this town before I become as hypocritical and petty as it is. Come on inside.'

He led the way into the apartment and knelt on the floor before his open suitcase. Threadbare curtains flapped over the books on the window-sill. The sun fell through the curtains and reflected in the glass of photographs on walls and table-tops, in

the ashtrays and empty glasses scattered about the floor, and in a large tilted mirror near the corner. Hubert sorted the books on the window-sill, packing those he wished to take with him and offering the others to the boy.

'After all,' he laughed, 'I *am* one of the finest young lyric poets in America, and some very important people will tell this city so. Edna St. Vincent Millay will tell them so. She wrote me letters of praise after I sent her each of my books. Very flattering letters, too. Why, in five hundred years this city will only be remembered because I, and a few people like me, happened to live here a little while. Just tell your friend that.'

He laughed, and shook his finger in the young man's face, burlesquing a schoolmarm, which he somewhat resembled. He was interrupted by the sound of a car door slamming and the voices of people on the street outside. With the dirty shirt and underwear which he was about to pack still held in his hand, he went to the entrance and peeped through the screen door.

'I do believe someone's coming to drive me to the station,' he said. 'My friends gave me a party here last night, and I had no idea anyone would come by again today to see me off.'

But when he saw who was coming up the walk he frowned, and spoke over his shoulder to the boy:

'Damn! This isn't who I thought it'd be. Now if the others come, there'll be an argument about who's to drive me to the station.'

Waving, he went out of the door, shouting:

'Hello, you all!'

Gwen had brought with her most of the people who had been on the picnic, and some others besides. They were all talking about a friend they called by her first name who had just hit the proverbial jackpot with an historical novel. Charles, who was most excited about this, began to talk to Hubert at once. But his wife came up and put her arms about Hubert and interrupted them.

'Honey, I'm so tired,' she said. 'We haven't been home since we left here last night.'

'Charles,' Hubert demanded indignantly, 'why don't you take this poor child home and let her get some sleep?'

'She can sleep here,' Charles said. 'Lie down on the bed. Hubert, mix us a drink!'

'Oh, no you don't, Hubert. I'll mix,' Gwen said. 'The last time Hubert mixed drinks he got drunk and everyone else stayed sober.'

'Why, that's an outrageous lie,' Hubert laughed. 'What will this boy think about me, hearing the way you talk?'

He introduced the boy around, watching closely to see if anyone in the crowd knew him. Apparently they did not. The boy was very impressed by meeting literary people for the first time and seeing for himself the atmosphere from which emerged stories and poems celebrating the southern country where children learn of death, love and immortality from the dark woods at night, from their contact with terrapins, hawks and hares, and from the cycles of the seasons, winter followed by spring.

'There's still ice and Coca-Cola in the tub,' Hubert said, 'but don't mix me one. I couldn't face a drink. Do you know what that boy who stayed here last night brought back when I sent him out for breakfast this morning? Coca-Cola and doughnuts. After all we drank last night!'

Charles tried to talk to Hubert about making money from writing, but Hubert would not answer. He said that he had to get himself dressed, and, putting his arm around the shoulder of the young boy, led the boy into the bathroom to talk to him while he shaved. The two young men from the department store were standing by the tub mixing drinks. Hubert accepted one for the boy, who sat on the closed toilet seat, and when the boy refused it, he took a sip himself and set the glass among the soapy, rusty razor blades on the sink. He lathered his face, looking in the mirror which hung against the blistered wall, and put together the broken razor. He had owned an electric shaver, but someone had stolen that. Between strokes as he shaved he talked.

'When I was home to bury my mother, I had to do everything myself,' he said. 'And when you love someone the way I loved my mother it's not easy to do those things. You don't think you can do them. But you do because there's nobody else who can. Everyone else lost control of themselves, but I just walked around in a daze taking care of everything. It's not like losing someone in life, which is horrid and petty and mean. It's worse, but it's such a great shock that at the time you can't believe it. It's too much.'

He stopped and looked at the boy, staring blankly at the boy's face as he had stared at his own in the mirror.

Importantly, the boy asked:

'Wasn't there anyone to help you?'

'Oh, the whole town was there! They all loved mother. There were more than two hundred at the funeral. I wasn't alone one minute. The one time in my life I didn't want to be the centre of attention, I was every minute. The only time I could be in a room alone was when I went to bed at night. But I had to do everything all the same. I bought the dress she was buried in, and the casket, arranged with the preacher and hired a singer. I had to, because I was the only one who kept his head. I don't want to sound hard, but that's the way it was. I just couldn't realize that it had happened. It wasn't until I left there and was on the bus on my way back here that it hit me. All of a sudden.'

He stopped, as an actor stops for breath in a long recitation, and rinsed the soap from his face. He spoke again, leaning over the basin, his voice muffled and amplified by the water.

'After the funeral, do you know what I did? I cleaned out the house and sold or gave away everything!'

'I guess that was the best thing to do,' the boy said.

'I opened up a regular country store. I piled all the furniture and kitchen utensils out on the back porch and let the niggers come up and look them over. "How much do you want for this, Mister Hubert," they'd ask. I'd tell them, they'd pay me and take the things away. I can't imagine how I did it, but I did.'

A car-full of young men had arrived and entered the apartment. Hubert halloed greetings to them through the bathroom door, but did not go out. He reached behind the boy, telling him not to bother to get up, and produced a tube of Boncilla.

'You'll be amazed at what this stuff does,' he said. 'It pulls your face right together. Just you wait and see.'

Smiling at his image in the mirror, he spread the clay over his face.

'I sold the house, too. I was going to leave it in care of the people next door to sell for me, and I'd already told them what the price was. Then an hour before I left, I sold it. A man drove up in an old car and said to me: "Son, I hear you want to sell your house". Son, indeed, I thought to myself; *this* one hasn't the money to buy anything. He was just a farmer. But, anyway, I said: "That's right, Son, look it over". Well, he went through the house, poking around all the empty corners, and then back out to his car, and told his kids to come in. He had two kids with him.

They went all over the yard, and the house again, poking into everything. Then he came up to me and said, just like that, would I take so much cash for it? Would I? Just like that. And in less than an hour I left town with the money in my pocket. Would you believe it? Hand me that towel.'

He wet one end of the towel and used it as a wash-rag to remove the Boncilla. The dry end he used to pat his face. Then he put an after-shave lotion and powder, and combed his hair with rose hair-oil.

'All from the dime store, mind you!' he said to the boy. 'Now we can go out and you can meet my friends. It never pays to be too honest with your friends. Or with your lovers. I never relax before my lovers, and as a result they think I have a very good figure, when as a matter of fact I haven't. Remember that. You're rather stoop-shouldered yourself.'

They made their entrance into the room with a confused flurry of greetings. Hubert introduced the boy around again, and again he did not seem to know anyone. Hubert envied him. These were interesting people when you first met them. After the surge of greetings, a sudden silence filled the room and in the silence a plump-faced boy told a joke. At catchline, 'loved him, loathed her', several young men who had been waiting for a part in the gaiety laughed loudly.

'You look wondrous,' one of them said to Hubert.

'Why, hello, you,' Hubert said brightly. 'Where's Freddie?'

After a few minutes, Gwen, who sat listening to the conversation with prodigious attention as though she were learning a new language, leaned forward and interrupted.

'Hubert-pie. I don't want to hurry you, but if you're going to be on time at the station you'd better see about getting things together.'

'Everything's together,' he smiled. 'I have to go see Mrs. McKinnon, but I'll do that right now.'

To the boy he added:

'Come along with me. You'll love Mrs. McKinnon.'

'Damn Mrs. McKinnon,' Charles said, stopping them at the door. 'I want a chance to talk to you before you leave.'

'Aren't you the ill-tempered one!' Hubert laughed. 'We'll be back as soon as we've seen Mrs. McKinnon. *She* isn't ill-tempered.'

He skipped out of the house and down the steps, and waited

for the boy who was behind him. He could have asked Charles to walk to the house with him, he knew, but he preferred admiration to advice. As they walked across the yard, trenched with dead leaves, he clutched the boy's arm and began chattering gaily.

'Wait until you see Mrs. McKinnon,' he said. 'She's the most wonderful old thing. She was kissed by General Lee. And she's been wonderful to me. When mother died, I 'phoned her and told her I had to be gone several more days. And she took care of everything for me and said for me not to worry, to stay as long as I liked. She even 'phoned those bastards I work for. Wasn't that sweet of her? After all, I'm just a boarder and no concern of hers. But she's a real lady.'

'I'm glad you got down before your mother died,' the boy said.

'Oh, yes,' Hubert nodded.

A whole new vista of memory opened to him: the circle of his waiting relatives talking of money and disease. But he and the boy were at the front of the house and mounting the granite steps to the porch. In the dim formal sitting-room of the house, crowded with old furniture and an upright organ in the corner, the shades were drawn against the light. Mrs. McKinnon appeared through the dining-room arch in response to his call. She seemed to float toward them. Hubert went forward, greeting her with a fierce smile and extending his hand the length of his arm. She crept to take his hand, but he grasped her elbow, and stood over her looking down into her face as he introduced her to the boy.

Mrs. McKinnon said:

'Hubert's a good boy. I'll miss him. But I'm glad he's leaving this place which reminds him of his mother's suffering.'

'I didn't let her suffer,' he said. 'Not at the last, you know, Mrs. McKinnon.'

Mrs. McKinnon slowly and expectantly looked up to his face. Her lips fell apart in attention.

'No,' Hubert said. 'I called the doctor aside the very first day was there and asked him if she would go easy or if it would be a long-drawn-out thing which might make her suffer. He said he didn't know. Mrs. Blackstone is a sturdy woman and she might hang on a long time. On the other hand, she might go any minute. I asked him what he meant by a long time. After all, I had a job then that I couldn't leave just indefinitely.'

'No, of course not,' Mrs. McKinnon said.

'Anyway, I went to mamma and asked her: "Do you feel any pain?" She said that she didn't except for her nausea.'

'Nausea,' Mrs. McKinnon repeated knowingly, and shook her head.

'She said that she didn't feel any real pain, just nausea. But I made her promise me that the very first minute she felt any she would tell me. And I asked her again the next day. I told her that she had been too good a woman for too many years for the Lord to let her suffer. She was practically a saint, you know. And the next day, when she admitted that she did feel a little pain, I sent someone for the doctor immediately and made him give her a hypodermic. Just like that. I didn't let her suffer a minute, Mrs. McKinnon. When that hypodermic began to wear off I made him give her another and another, right up to the end. No mam, she didn't feel any pain, none at all.'

'It must be a comfort to you to know you did the best you could,' Mrs. McKinnon said.

He patted her hand.

'Well, I just came to tell you that I'm going to be off in a little while, and I'll tell you good-bye now because I know you'll be taking your nap later. Everything is in shipshape order, and I'll leave the key at the back door with Hanna.'

He hugged the old woman and led her with him as far as the door, where she said good-bye. When he was in the yard again with the boy he began to feel as he had in the bus coming back from the funeral, sentimental and bitter. The sadness of all things completed.

'I wish I were your age and had as much cash as I've got now,' he said. 'I'd go to New York and not do a thing for a year but write, write, write! As it is, I have to get a job. When you've been around as long as I have, even as young as I am, you always look for a job. But at least I'll be able to wait until I find one worthy of me. I won't have to take just anything the way I've had to here. Everything is going to be good for me from now on. I can feel it.'

He was behind the house now, walking through the loud leaves toward the terrace where his friends were standing outside, all talking at once, none listening. For a moment he saw a cause in its effect, like a reflection in a mirror.

'Oh, I am going to miss you all so,' he said, taking the boy's arm. 'So, don't you think it doesn't take courage to leave.'



CHICAGO

by WALKER EVANS



GOD IN CHRIST

REV. LUKE AUSTIN, PASTOR





GINGER
RED HOT
BRITTON

WHAT. NO GARTERS?

SOULS
IN
DAWN

SPICY

GINGER
BRITTON

TODAY

THE HIGHER LEARNING IN AMERICA

JACQUES BARZUN

FOR a very good reason which has universal import, there is no Higher Learning in America. There is none, perhaps, in the world, if by higher learning we understand the play of original mind upon matters of fact and within the bounds of the academy: Kant, Taine, T. H. Green, or William James. But there is in America an immense amount of Lower Learning—widespread, energetic, at times fanatical. The reason which prevents the existence of a higher learning is in fact the motive behind this intense though cruder activity. The reason is: seventy-five years of industrial democracy—public schools, newspaper literacy, the standardization of tastes through consumers' art, the decline of pride and the speeding-up of all forms of ripening. To match the facts of communal levelling, tradition and natural genius have been debunked, and this has fostered the belief that education is paramount, that anything can be learned.

In the United States, recent events have strengthened this belief, so that it now amounts to an instinct. When the educational subsidy for the war 'veterans' was passed, many officials vowed that they would not tamper with standards, and indeed they have not lowered entrance requirements; neither have they raised them. But on the actual return of the men, almost everyone took it for granted that enrolments should be allowed to double—seemingly not knowing that this would not double but halve accomplishment. The lack of room, of books, of teachers, of leisure, was treated as but a slight inconvenience which all concerned ought to ignore. The result is that nearly all American universities and colleges have by now been broken in to mass education.

What is mass education? We think we know when we compare it with mass production, but we do not always see how far the likeness goes. The aura of 'democracy' which is cast by the false identification of the mass with 'the masses' induces a pleasant muddle that makes for righteousness. But mass education does not simply mean admitting into college anyone with a modicum of

brains and good will; it means adjusting the course of study to the contour of this intellectual lowland. Mass education means 8,600 Freshmen from Michigan going up each year to the State University, all 'taking' English literature, and 8,000 of them 'passing'—passing by it, through it, over it. Mass education is the modern equivalent of 'Christianity Made Plain to the Meanest Understanding'. In the religion of the twentieth century, the State *must* provide its people with mass education. Eighty-six hundred is only a beginning, and even if numbers should temporarily decline after the subsidy expires, the ideal will remain, like the necessity, and find other means of fulfilment.

In speaking of necessity, I am not thinking of the traditional demand for the intelligent voter: the same compulsion would exist under any modern government. I am thinking rather of the need to classify, label, and 'process' the population. It may not be a need but it acts like a need. The market decrees that a capable person whose education has been genuine but irregular shall be debarred from advancement, often from employment. Whereas—'You've a B.A. with two years of psychology? Then we can use you in our personnel department.' A college degree, a whiff of psychology or accounting or child guidance, is becoming as indispensable to the common man as a birth certificate, a passport, a *carte d'identité*.

This commercial test spurs individual anxiety (in place of the former 'ambition') and turns all education into vocational training. Since all have a democratic right to the common status of 'college trained', whether they start from the top or bottom of society, they feel equally cheated when someone tries to interpose the irrelevant standard of intellect. It seems like a regression to the privilege of birth—and it is. Consequently the progress of mass education is irreversible. Like mass production it precludes hand finishing, and competition blocks any return to the individual modes from which the higher learning sprang.

This state of affairs is clearly not peculiar to the United States, or at least will not long remain a national peculiarity. Mass instruction is the logical counterpart of welfare government. And desirable as well as logical, even if at first there seems to be no real connection between the contents of the innumerable courses and the tasks imposed by the industrial world. What *studies* belong to the craft of air stewardess? As well ask why the

clergy of the Church of England were once expected to construe Aristophanes at sight. We generously assume that there was a sound link between the old classical education and the role of statesman, philosopher, and divine. If so, there is today as clear a connection between the odd verbal noises of mass processing and the semi-fantastic paper work, the ubiquitous 'public relations' (Venus Carfax?), and the totemistic discipline of the modern jobs. That is why in modern America there are so many course-takers, so many Institutes—so much learning, in the simple sense of people bent over books or stiff under lectures. From the point of view of what's wanted by both the world and the people, no educational system has ever been at once so heroic and so satisfactory.

Yet someone may wonder whether in speaking of higher learning it is fair to look only at youth in college and at graduates in the market place. Is there not a great superstructure of post-graduate studies and scientific research which deserves now as always the name of higher learning? And even within the homogeneous jelly of matriculates is there not a constant distillation upwards of the finer spirits, drawn to the contemplative life, and especially encouraged these days by the anti-vocational rebellions at Chicago, Harvard, and Columbia?

As to the first question, the answer is No. The superstructure is but a second assembly line; only it is a little slower in every way than the one below. Scientific research is not higher learning. It has been, as all know, a priggish, narrow, anti-philosophical and—until recently—a socially unaware enterprise, carried on with tools inherited from better men. One of the hardest things to bear since the atom bomb exploded has been the rediscovery of the humanities by the white ant in our midst, previously so busy and so blind.

Nor have graduate studies in these same humanities offered much more to the man of intellect. They have not formed great teachers nor great followings. The degrees of Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy have become mere guild badges, obtainable on the Meistersinger principle of following dull rules under dull men. A misunderstanding of historical method has dried up the study of literature and the arts; an impossible aping of the great period of German scholarship has stultified the other

subjects and made research a ritual; while the newer disciplines—psychology, anthropology, and sociology—have promptly lost themselves in barbarisms of tongue and mind. The teachers' colleges, yielding to political pressure, have been forced to dilute subject matter still further, thickening only the means of discourse. Judged as seminaries for higher learning, all these institutions are less than fertile. Their very effectiveness tends to destroy learning as if it were a weed.

For they work on other principles: the so-called higher degrees are often the charitable reward of well-meaning industry: none are called but nearly all are chosen. Indeed, the educational 'Progressives' teach that the true way to encourage merit is to measure improvement from the individual starting point, however low, rather than praise absolute accomplishment. Instead of regarding post-collegiate study as the special opportunity of the specially gifted, it is too often looked upon as another chance to inculcate elementary subjects which the given student missed or muffed. The chances are against any one's going too far ahead of the rest, hence all may move together with an easy mind. All this is perfectly consistent with the ideals of mass instruction; it is justifiable, and not to be altered or attacked without great evil.

Attacks have nevertheless been made from within the system and reforms proposed. Lowell of Harvard began the fight against academic practices in America some forty years ago. He conceived of a native American education for the young that might in time produce an *élite*, and before he retired in 1934 he founded the Society of Fellows to make possible what the higher learning has always called disinterested study, that is to say, passionately interested—as against vocationally or even socially interested—study. A quarter of a century ago, John Erskine at Columbia inaugurated the return to the 'great books', hoping to re-establish a common fund of ideas and words for communication among educated men. Latterly at Chicago this programme has been made into a whole curriculum and brought to the laity through extension courses. Chancellor Hutchins trusts that these courses will multiply, and avert the disaster of nation-wide boredom. Columbia, on the scale of its small undergraduate college, has for some years compelled all men entering the professions to study the scientific, social, and artistic heritage of our culture and do something thorough in one of these fields. Two years ago the

Harvard report on 'General Education' summed up all these innovations while urging the country to graft them upon its present mass instruction.

The confusion obviously persists: whereas Lowell and Erskine tried to go against the current for the sake of an ultimate higher learning, the popularization of their ideas at Chicago and Harvard has inflated the plan to the size of the mass. The gods of mass education have swallowed up the heretics, ignoring that in certain matters differences of kind arise quite simply from differences in numbers. The best students can be well taught only in small groups. No one has ever devised an adequate technique for mass cookery, and experience suggests that a fine intellect is as delicate as a veal cutlet. Again, the best must be chosen, gathered, and taught together, for then the sparks will fly faster and hotter; the few will emulate and teach one another. How can this be done when the class is 600—or 8,600—strong, or when a lecturer is confined to broad effects and cruel repetition through a voice-distorting microphone?

If sacrifice is a measure of worthiness, nothing can be more highly regarded in heaven than mass instruction, for we sacrifice to it all our natural geniuses. Each year, in spite of financial and physical obstacles, of institutional and personal hazards, a few men and women gifted with superior brains enter America's colleges and universities and there discover an inclination for the life of learning. On the Faculties are men and women who have inherited or improvised the standards, the feelings, the art of superior teaching. Even if teacher and student meet, by luck or cunning, or sometimes even by regular arrangement under the seminar system, the sacrifice takes place. For the encounter, though pleasant, is ephemeral, and the whole occurrence is an exception not seriously provided for. What future can such a student have? Where can he find a band of like-minded men, young or old? What use could the current culture make of their scholar-gypsying?

No, this new type of solitary, this hermit without a desert, must shortly become practical by conforming to the prevailing (and quite worthy) mass behaviour. He must obtain his *carte d'identité* and not wander like a loose electron in an unstable atom. He has been born too early or too late: just now his world

is seeking stability through steadfast groupings that will ensure common action, and he must pare himself down to the desirable mean of understanding. The types of men devoted in the past to higher learning were dangerously fissionable material. The Kants and Jameses start revolutions without demagoguery and attract disciples without any rigging of amplifiers. No society placed as ours is after a great century of individualism could afford to provide even in its secret thought for such exceptions. It would be full of risk, impolitic, perverse, and fraught with precedent. It might provoke a chain reaction of envy fatal to the State. That is why there is no higher learning in America, perhaps none in the world; *voilà pourquoi votre fille est muette*.

THE INVISIBLE MAN

RALPH ELLISON

It goes a long way back, some twenty years. All my life I had been looking for something, and everywhere I turned someone tried to tell me what it was. I accepted their answers, too, though they were often in contradiction and even self-contradictory. I was naïve. I was looking for myself and asking everyone except myself questions which I, and only I, could answer. It took me a long time and much painful boomeranging of my expectations to realize a matter everyone else appears to have been born with: that I am nobody but myself, an invisible man!

And yet I am no freak of nature, nor of history. I was in the cards, other things having been equal (or unequal) eighty-five years ago. I am not ashamed of my grandparents for having been slaves. I am only ashamed of myself for having at one time been ashamed. About eighty-five years ago they were told that they were free, united with others of our country in everything pertaining to the common good, and, in everything social, separate like the fingers of the hand. And they believed it. They exulted in it. They stayed in their place, worked hard, and brought up my father to do the same. But my grandfather is the one. He was an odd old guy—my grandfather, and I'm told I take after him. It was he who caused the trouble. On his deathbed he called my father to him and said, 'Son, after I'm gone I want you to keep

up the good fight. I never told you, but our life is a war and I have been a traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy's country all my born days, ever since I give up my gun back in the Reconstruction. Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yesses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open.' They thought the old man had gone out of his head. He had been the meekest of men. The younger children were rushed from the room, the shades drawn and the flame of the lamp turned so low that it sputtered on the wick like the old man's breathing. 'Learn it to the young 'uns,' he whispered fiercely. Then he died.

But my folks were more alarmed over his last words than over his dying. I was warned emphatically to forget it and, indeed, this is the first time it has been repeated outside the family circle. It had a tremendous effect upon me, however. I could never be sure of what he meant. Grandfather had been a meek old man who never made any trouble, yet on his deathbed he had called himself a traitor and a spy, and he had spoken of his meekness as a dangerous activity. It became a constant puzzle which lay unanswered in the back of my mind. And whenever things went well for me I remembered my grandfather and felt guilty, and uncomfortable. It was as though I was carrying out his advice in spite of myself. And to make it worse, everyone loved me for it. I was praised by the most lilywhite men of the town. I was considered an example of desirable conduct—just as my grandfather had been. And what puzzled me was that the old man had defined it as *treachery*. When I was praised for my conduct I felt a guilt that in some way I was doing something that was really against the wishes of the white folks, that if they had understood they would have desired me to act just the opposite, that I should have been sulky and bad and that really would have been what they wanted, even though they were fooled and thought they wanted me to act as I did. It made me very afraid that some day they would look upon me as a traitor and I would be lost. Still, I was afraid to act any other way because they didn't like that at all. The old man's words were like a curse. On my graduation day I delivered a paper in which I showed that humility was the secret, indeed, the very essence, of progress. (Not that I believed this. How could I, remembering my

grandfather? I only knew that it worked.) It was a great success. Everyone praised me and I was invited to give the speech before the town's leading white citizens. It was a triumph for our whole community.

When I got there I discovered that it was on the occasion of a smoker, and I was told that since I was to be there anyway I might as well take part in the battle royal to be fought by some of my schoolmates as part of the entertainment. The battle royal came first. It was in the main ballroom of the leading hotel. All the town's big shots were there in their tuxedos, wolfing down the buffet foods, drinking beer and whisky and smoking black cigars. It was a large room with a high ceiling. Chairs were arranged in neat rows around three sides of a portable boxing ring. The fourth side was clear, revealing a gleaming space of polished floor. I had some misgivings over the battle royal, by the way. Not from a distaste for fighting, but because I didn't care too much for the other fellows who were to take part. They were tough guys, who seemed to have no grandfather curses worrying their minds. No one could have mistaken their toughness. And besides, I suspected that fighting a battle royal might detract from the dignity of my speech. In those pre-invisible days I visualized myself a neo-Booker T. Washington. But the other fellows didn't care too much for me, either, and there were nine of them. I felt superior to them in my way, and I didn't like the manner in which we were all crowded together into the servants' elevator. Nor did they like my being there. In fact as the warmly lighted floors flashed past the elevator we had words over the fact that I, by taking part in the fight, had knocked one of their friends out of a night's work.

We were led out of the elevator through a rococo hall into an ante-room and told to get into our fighting togs. Each of us was issued with a pair of boxing gloves. Then we were told to go out into the ballroom and wait our turn. When ready we were ushered out and entered the big, mirrored hall as instructed, looking cautiously about us, and whispering lest we might accidentally be heard in the noise of the room. It was foggy with cigar smoke. And already the whisky was taking effect. I was shocked to see that some of the most important men of the town were tipsy. They were all there, bankers, lawyers, judges, doctors, fire chiefs, teachers, merchants. Even one of the more fashionable

pastors. Something we could not see was going on up front. A clarinet was vibrating sensuously and the men were standing up and moving forward. We were a small tight group, clustered together, our bare upper bodies touching and shining with anticipatory sweat; while up front the big shots were becoming increasingly excited over something we could not see. Suddenly I heard the school superintendent who had told me to come yell, 'Bring up the shines, gentlemen! Bring up the little shines!'

We were rushed up to the front of the ballroom. It smelled strongly of tobacco and whisky and when we were pushed into place I almost wet my pants. A sea of faces, some hostile, some amused, ringed round us, and in the centre, facing us, stood a magnificent blonde, stark nude. There was dead silence. I felt a blast of cold air chill me. I tried to back away, but they were behind me and around me. Some of the boys stood with lowered heads, trembling. I felt a wave of irrational guilt and fear. My teeth chattered, my skin turned to goose flesh, my knees knocked. Yet I was strongly attracted and looked in spite of myself. Had the price of looking been blindness, I would have looked. The hair was yellow like that of a circus kewpie doll, the face heavily powdered and rouged, as though to form an abstract mask, the eyes hollow and smeared a cool blue—the colour of a baboon's butt. I felt a compulsive desire to spit upon her as my eyes brushed slowly over her body. Her breasts were firm and round as the domes of East Indian temples, and I stood so close as to see the fine skin texture and beads of pearly perspiration glistening like dew around the pink and erected buds of her nipples. I wanted at one and the same time to run from the room, to sink through the floor, or go to her and cover her from my eyes and the eyes of the others with my body; to feel the soft thighs, to caress her and destroy her, to love her and murder her, to hide from her, and yet to stroke where below the small American flag tattooed upon her belly her thighs formed a clear, inverted V. I had a notion that of all in the room she saw only me with her impersonal eyes.

And then she began to dance, a slow sensuous movement; the smoke of a hundred cigars clinging to her like the thinnest of veils. She seemed like a fair bird-girl girdled in veils calling to me from the angry surface of some grey and threatening sea. I was transported. Then I became aware of a clarinet playing and

the big shots yelling at us. Some threatened us if we looked and others if we did not. On my right I saw one boy faint and a man grabbed a silver pitcher from a table, stepping close as he dashed iced water upon him, then stood him up and forced two of us to support him as his head hung, and moans issued from his thick bluish lips. Another boy began to plead to go home. He was the largest of the group, wearing dark-red fighting tights much too small to conceal the erection which projected from him as though in answer to the insinuating low-registered moaning of the clarinet. He tried to hide himself with his boxing gloves. And all the while the blonde continued dancing, smiling faintly at the big shots who watched her with fascination, and faintly smiling at our fear. I noticed a certain merchant who followed her hungrily, his lips loose and drooling. He was a large man who wore diamond studs in a shirtfront, which swelled with the ample pouch underneath, and each time the blonde swayed her undulating hips he ran his hand through the thin hair of his bald head and, with his arms upheld, his posture clumsy like that of an intoxicated panda, wound his belly in a slow and obscene grind. This creature was completely hypnotized. The music had quickened. The dancer flung herself about with detached facial expression, the men began reaching out to touch her. I could see their beefy fingers sink into the soft flesh. Some of the others tried to stop them and she began to move around the floor in graceful circles as they gave chase, slipping and sliding over the polished floor. It was mad. Chairs went crashing, beer was spilt as they ran laughing and howling after her. They caught her just as she reached a door, raised her from the floor, and tossed her as college boys are tossed at a hazing, and above her red, fixed-smiling lips I saw the terror and disgust in her eyes, almost like my own terror and that I saw in some of the other boys, as I watched. They tossed her twice and her soft breasts seemed to flatten against the air and her legs flung wildly as she spun. Some of the more sober ones helped her to escape. And I started off the floor, heading for the ante-room with the rest of the boys.

Some were still crying and in hysteria. But as we tried to leave we were stopped and ordered to get into the ring. There was nothing to do but what we were told. All ten of us climbed under the ropes and allowed ourselves to be blindfolded with broad bands of white cloth. One of the men seemed to feel a bit

sympathetic and tried to cheer us up as we stood with our backs against the ropes. Some of us tried to grin. 'See that boy over there?' one of the men said. 'I want you to run across at the bell and give it to him right in the belly. If you don't get him, I'm going to get you. I don't like his looks.' Each of us was told the same. The blindfolds were put on. Yet even then I had been going over my speech. In my mind each word was as bright as flame. I felt the cloth pressed into place and frowned so that it would be loosened when I relaxed.

But now I felt a sudden fit of blind terror. I was unused to darkness. It was as though I had suddenly found myself in a dark room filled with poisonous cottonmouths. I could hear the bleary voices yelling insistently for the battle royal to begin.

'Get going in there!'

'Let me at that big nigger!'

I strained to pick out the school superintendent's voice, as though to squeeze some security out of that slightly more familiar sound.

'Let me at those black sonsabitches!' someone yelled.

'No, Jackson, no!' another voice yelled. . . 'Here, somebody help me hold Jack.'

'I want to get at that ginger-coloured bugger. Tear him limb from limb,' the first voice yelled.

I stood against the ropes trembling. For in those days I was what they called ginger-coloured and he sounded as though he might crunch me between his teeth like a crisp ginger cookie. Quite a struggle was going on. Chairs were being kicked about and I could hear voices grunting as with a terrific effort. I wanted to see, to see more desperately than ever before. But the blindfold was tight as a thick, skin-puckering scab and when I raised my gloved hand to push the layers of white aside a voice yelled, 'Oh, no you don't, black bastard! Leave that alone!'

'Ring the bell before Jackson kills him a coon!' someone boomed in the sudden silence. And I heard the bell clang and the sound of the feet scuffling forward.

A glove smacked against my head. I pivoted, striking out stiffly as someone went past, and felt the jar ripple along the length of my arm to my shoulder. Then it seemed as though all nine of the boys had turned upon me at once. Blows pounded me from all sides while I struck out as best I could. So many blows

landed upon me that I wondered if I were not the only blindfolded fighter in the ring, or if the man called Jackson hadn't succeeded in getting me after all.

Blindfolded, I sensed that I could not control my motions and that I had no dignity. I stumbled about like a baby or a drunker man. The smoke had become thicker and with each new blow it seemed to sear and further restrict my lungs. My saliva became like hot bitter glue. A glove connected with my head, filling my mouth with warm blood. It was everywhere. I could not tell if the moisture I felt upon my body was sweat or blood. A blow landed hard against the nape of my neck. I felt myself going over, my head hitting the floor. Streaks of blue light filled the black world behind the blindfold. I lay prone pretending that I was knocked out, but felt myself seized by hands and yanked to my feet. 'Get going, black boy! Mix it up!' My arms were like lead, my head smarting from blows. I managed to feel my way to the ropes and held on trying to catch my breath. A glove landed in my mid-section and I went over again feeling as though the smoke had become a knife jabbed into my guts. Pushed this way and that by the legs milling around me, I finally pulled erect and discovered that I could see. The blindfold had slipped a fraction and I could see the black, sweat-washed forms weaving in the smoky-blue atmosphere like drunken dancers weaving to the rapid drum-like thuds of blows. Everyone fought hysterically. It was complete anarchy. Everybody fought everybody else. No group fought together for long. Two, three, four, fought one, then turned to fight each other, were themselves attacked. Blows landed below the belt and in the kidney, with the gloves open as well as closed. My eye was partly opened now and there was not so much terror. I moved carefully, avoiding blows, although not too many to attract attention, fighting from group to group. The boys groped about like blind, cautious crabs, crouching to protect their mid-sections, their heads pulled in short against their shoulders, their arms stretched nervously before them with their fists testing the smoke-filled air like the knobbed feelers of hypersensitive snails. In one corner I glimpsed a boy violently punching the air and heard him scream in pain as he smashed his hand against a ring post. For a second I saw him bent over, holding his hand, then going down as a blow caught his unprotected head. I played one group against the other, slipping in and throwing a punch

then stepping out of range while pushing the others into the *mêlée* to take the blows blindly aimed at me. The smoke was agonizing and there were no rounds, no bells at four-minute intervals to relieve our exhaustion. The room spun round me, a swirl of lights, smoke, sweating bodies—surrounded by tense white faces. I bled from both nose and mouth, the blood spattered from time to time upon my chest. The men kept yelling, 'Slug him, black boy. Knock his guts out!'

'Uppercut him. Kill that big boy!'

Taking a fake fall, I saw a boy going down heavily beside me as though he were felled by a single blow, saw a sneaker-clad foot shoot into his groin as the two who had knocked him down tumbled upon him as I rolled out of range.

The harder we fought the more threatening the men became. And yet I had begun to worry about my speech again. How would it go? Would they recognize my ability? What would they give me?

I was fighting automatically when suddenly I noticed that one after another of the boys was leaving the ring. I was surprised, filled with panic, as though I had been left alone with an unknown danger. Then I understood. The boys had arranged it among themselves. It was the custom for the two men left in the ring to slug it out for the winner's prize. I discovered this too late. When the bell sounded two men in tuxedos leaped into the ring and removed the blindfold. I found myself facing Tatlock, the biggest of the gang. I felt sick at my stomach. Hardly had the bell stopped ringing in my ears than it clanged again and I saw him moving swiftly towards me. Thinking of nothing else to do I hit him smash on the nose. He kept coming, bringing the sharp violence of rank sweat. His face was a black blank of a face, only his eyes alive—with hate of me, and aglow with a feverish terror from what had happened to us all. I became anxious. I wanted to deliver my speech and he came at me as though he meant to beat it out of me. I smashed him again and again, taking his blows as they came. Then on a sudden impulse I struck him lightly and as we clinched, I whispered, 'Fake like I knocked you out, you can have the prize.'

'I'll break your behind,' he whispered hoarsely.

'For *them*?'

'For *me*, sonofabitch!'

They were yelling for us to break it up and Tatlock spun me half around with a blow, and as a joggled camera sweeps in a reeling scene, I saw the howling red faces crouching tense beneath the clouds of blue-grey smoke. For a moment the world wavered, unravelled, flowed, then my head cleared and Tatlock bounced before me. That fluttering shadow before my eyes was his jabbing left hand. Then falling forward, my head against his damp shoulder, I whispered,

'I'll make it five dollars more.'

'Go to hell!'

But his muscles relaxed a trifle beneath my pressure and I breathed, 'Seven!'

'Give it to your ma,' he said, ripping me beneath the heart. And while I still held him I butted him and moved away. I felt myself bombarded with punches. I fought back with hopeless desperation. I wanted to deliver my speech more than anything else in the world, because I felt that only these men could judge truly my ability, and now this stupid clown was ruining my chances. I began fighting carefully now, moving in to punch him and out again with my faster speed. A lucky blow to his chin and I had him going too—until I heard a loud voice yell, 'I got my money on the big boy'. Hearing this I almost dropped my guard. I was confused: should I try to win against the voice out there? Would not this go against my speech, and was not this a moment for humility, for non-resistance? A blow to my head as I danced about sent my right eye popping like a jack-in-the-box and settled my dilemma. The room went red as I fell. It was a dream fall, my body languid and fastidious as to where to land, until the floor became impatient and smashed up to meet me. A moment later I came to. An hypnotic voice said 'FIVE' . . . emphatically. And I lay there, hazily watching a dark red spot of my own blood shaping itself into a butterfly, glistening and soaking into the soiled grey world of the canvas.

When the voice drawled 'TEN' I was lifted up and dragged to a chair. I sat dazed. My eye pained and swelled with each throb of my pounding heart and I wondered if now I would be allowed to speak. I was wringing wet, my mouth still bleeding. We were grouped along the wall now. The other boys ignored me as they congratulated Tatlock and speculated as to how much they would be paid. One boy whimpered over his smashed hand.

Looking up front, I saw attendants in white jackets rolling the portable ring away and placing a small square rug in the vacant space surrounded by chairs. 'Perhaps,' I thought, 'I will stand on the rug to deliver my speech.'

Then the M.C. called to us. My heart fell when he said, 'Come on up here, boys, and get your money.'

We ran forward to where the men laughed and talked in their chairs, waiting. Everyone seemed friendly now.

'There it is on the rug,' the man said. I saw the rug covered with coins of all dimensions and a few crumpled bills. But what excited me, scattered here and there were gleaming pieces of gold.

'Boys, it's all yours,' the man said. 'That's right, Sambo,' a blond man said, winking at me confidentially.

I trembled with excitement, forgetting my pain. I would get the gold and the bills, I thought. I would use both hands. I would throw my body against the others to block them from the gold.

'Get down around the rug now,' the man commanded, 'and don't anyone touch it until I give the signal.'

'This ought to be good,' I heard.

As told, we got around the square rug on our knees. Slowly the man raised his freckled hand and we followed it upwards with our eyes.

I heard, 'These niggers look like they're about to pray!'

Then, 'Ready,' the man said, 'Go!'

I lunged for a yellow coin lying on the blue design of the carpet, touching it and sending a surprised shriek to join those rising around me. I tried frantically to remove my hand but could not let go. A hot violent force tore through my body, shaking me like a wet rat. The rug was electrified. The hair bristled up on my head as I shook myself free. My muscles jumped, my nerves jangled, writhed. But I saw that this was not stopping the other boys. Laughing in fear and embarrassment some were holding back and scooping up the coins knocked off by the painful contortions of the others. The men roared above us as we struggled.

'Pick it up, goddamit, pick it up!' someone called like a bass-voiced parrot. 'Go on, get it!'

I crawled rapidly around the floor, picking up the coins, trying to avoid the coppers and to get greenbacks and the gold. Ignoring the shock by laughing, as I brushed the coins off quickly

I discovered that I could contain the electricity—a contradiction, but it works. Then the men began to push us upon the rug. Laughing embarrassedly, we struggled out of their hands and kept after the coins. We were all wet and slippery and hard to hold. Suddenly I saw a boy lifted into the air, glistening with sweat like a circus seal, and dropped, his wet back landing flush upon the electrically charged rug, heard him yell and saw him literally dance upon his back, his elbows beating a frenzied rhythm upon the floor, his muscles twitching like the flesh of a horse stung by many flies. When he finally rolled off, his face was grey and no one stopped him when he ran from the floor amid booming laughter.

‘Get that money,’ the M.C. called. ‘That’s good, hard American cash!’

And we snatched and grabbed, snatched and grabbed. I was careful not to come too close to the rug now, and when I felt the hot whisky breath descend upon me like a cloud of foul air, I reached out and grabbed the leg of a chair. It was occupied, and I held on desperately.

‘Leggo, nigger! Leggo!’

The huge face wavered down to mine as he tried to push me free. But my body was slippery and he was too drunk. It was Mr. Colcord, who owned a chain of movie houses and entertainment palaces. Each time he grabbed me I slipped out of his hands. It became a real struggle. I feared the rug more than I did the drunk, so I held on, surprising myself for a moment by trying to topple *him* upon the rug. It was such an enormous idea that I found myself actually carrying it out. I tried not to be obvious, yet trying to tumble him out of the chair I grabbed his leg, when he raised up roaring with laughter, and, looking me dead in the eye, kicked me viciously in the chest. The chair leg flew out of my hand and I felt myself going and rolled. It was as though I had rolled through a bed of hot coals. It seemed a whole century would pass before I would roll free, a century in which I was seared through the deepest levels of my body to the fearful breath within me, and the breath seared and heated to the point of explosion. ‘It’ll all be over in a flash,’ I thought, as I rolled clear.

‘All be over in a flash.’ But not yet. The men on the other side were waiting, red faces swollen as though from apoplexy as

they bent forward in their chairs. Seeing their fingers coming towards me I rolled away, as a fumbled football rolls off the receiver's fingertips, back into the coals. That time I luckily sent the rug sliding out of place and heard the coins ringing against the floor and the boys scuffling to pick them up and the M.C. calling, 'All right, boys, that's all. Go get dressed and get your money.'

I was limp as a dishrag. My back felt as though it had been beaten with wires. When we had dressed, the M.C. came in and gave us each five dollars, except Tatlock, who got ten for being last in the ring. Then he told us to leave. I was not to get a chance to deliver my speech, I thought. I was going out into the dim garbage-filled alley in despair when I was stopped and told to go back. When I went back the men were pushing back their chairs and gathering in groups to talk. The M.C. knocked on a table for quiet.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'we almost forgot an important part of the programme. A *most* serious part, gentlemen. This boy was brought here to deliver a speech which he made at his graduation yesterday . . .'

'Bravo!'

'I'm told that he is the smartest boy we've got out there in Milltown. I'm told that he knows more big words than a pocket-sized dictionary.'

Much applause and laughter.

'So now, gentlemen, I want you to give him your attention.'

There was still laughter as I faced them, my mouth was dry, my eye throbbing. I began slowly, but evidently my throat was tense, because they began shouting, 'Louder! Louder!'

I began again, tensing my diaphragm to project my voice, although it ached from the many blows to my solar plexus.

'We of the younger generation extol the wisdom of that great leader and educator,' I shouted, 'who first spoke these flaming words of wisdom: "A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal: 'Water, water: we die of thirst!'" The answer from the friendly vessel came back: 'Cast down your bucket where you are'. The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh sparkling water from the mouth

of the Amazon River." And like him I say, and in his words, "To those of my race who depend upon bettering their condition in a foreign land, or who undertake the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, who is his next-door neighbour, I would say: 'Cast down your bucket where you are'—cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded . . .'"

I spoke automatically and with such fervour that I did not realize that the men were still talking and laughing until my dry mouth filling up with blood from the cut, almost strangled me. I coughed, wanting to stop and go to one of the tall brass, sand-filled spittoons to relieve myself, but a few of the men, especially the superintendent, were listening, and I was afraid, so I gulped it down, blood, saliva and all, and continued. What powers of endurance I had during those days! What enthusiasm! What a belief in the rightness of things! I spoke even louder in spite of the pain. But they still talked and still they laughed as though with cotton in dirty ears. So I spoke with greater emotional emphasis. I closed my ears and swallowed blood until I was nauseated. The speech seemed a hundred times as long as before, but I could not leave out a single word. All had to be said, each memorized nuance considered, rendered. Nor was that all. Whenever I uttered a word of three or more syllables a group of voices would yell, for me to repeat it. I used the phrase 'social responsibility' and they yelled:

'What's that word you say, boy?'

'Social responsibility,' I said.

'What?'

'Social . . .'

'Louder . . .'

'Responsibility.'

'More!'

'Responsi——'

'Repeat!'

'——bility.'

The room filled with the uproar of laughter until, no doubt, distracted by having to gulp down my blood, I made a mistake and yelled a phrase I had often seen denounced in newspaper editorials, heard debated in private.

'Social . . .'

'What?' they yelled.

'Equality.'

The laughter hung smoke-like in the sudden stillness. I opened my eyes, puzzled. Sounds of displeasure filled the room. The M.C. rushed forward. They shouted hostile phrases at me. But I did not understand. A small, dry, moustached man in the front row blared out, 'Say that slowly, son!'

'What, sir?'

'What you just said.'

'Social responsibility, sir,' I said.

'You weren't being smart, were you, boy?' he said not unkindly.

'No, sir!'

'You sure that about "equality" was a mistake?'

'Yes, sir,' I said. 'I was swallowing blood.'

'Well, you had better speak more slowly so we can understand. We mean to do right by you but you've got to know your place at all times. All right, now, go on with your speech.'

I was afraid. I wanted to leave but I wanted also to speak, and I was afraid they'd snatch me down. 'Thank you, sir,' I said, beginning where I had left off, and having them ignore me as before.

Yet when I finished there was a thunderous applause. I was surprised to see the superintendent come forth with a package wrapped in white tissue paper, and gesturing for quiet, address the men.

'Gentlemen, you see that I did not over-praise this boy. He makes a good speech and some day he'll lead his people and we will find him useful. And I don't have to tell you that that is important in these days and times. This is a good, smart boy, and so to encourage him in the right direction, in the name of the Board of Education I wish to present him with a prize in the form of this . . .'

He paused, removing the tissue paper and revealing a gleaming calfskin briefcase.

'In the form of this first-class article from Shad Whitmore's shop.'

'Boy,' he said, addressing me. 'Take this prize and keep it well. Consider it a badge of office. Prize it. Keep developing as you are and some day it will be filled with important papers that will help shape the destiny of your people.'

I was so moved that I could hardly express my thanks. A rope of bloody saliva drooled upon the leather, forming a shape like an

undiscovered continent, and I wiped it quickly away. I felt an importance that I had never dreamed before.

'Open it and see what's inside,' I was told.

My fingers atremble, I complied, smelling the fresh leather and seeing an official-looking document inside. It was a scholarship to the state college for Negroes. My eyes filled with tears and I ran awkwardly off the floor. I was overjoyed. I did not even mind when I discovered that the gold pieces I had scrambled for were brass pocket tokens advertising a certain make of Detroit automobile.

When I reached home everyone was excited. Next day the neighbours came to congratulate me. I even felt safe from my grandfather, whose deathbed curse usually spoiled my triumphs. I stood beneath his photograph with my briefcase in hand and smiled triumphantly into his stolid, black, peasant's face. It was a face that fascinated me. The eyes seemed to follow everywhere I went. That night I dreamed I was at a circus with him and that he refused to laugh at the clowns no matter what they did, then later he told me to open my briefcase and read what was inside and I did, finding an official envelope stamped with the state seal and inside the envelope I found another and another, endlessly, and I thought I would fall of weariness. 'Them's yours,' he said. 'Now open that one,' and I did and in it I found an engraved document containing a short message in letters of gold: 'Read it,' my grandfather said. 'Out loud!'

'To Whom it May Concern,' I intoned. 'Keep This Nigger-Boy Running.' I awoke with the old man's laughter ringing in my ears.

LETTER FROM SAN FRANCISCO

PHILIP LAMANTIA

SAN FRANCISCO and Northern California have recently become busy centres of intellectual and creative activity, differing radically from general American trends of the 'thirties. A generation is rising that is remarkably alive to new orientations—new methods of expression, new moral and intellectual concerns. It is largely a post-war generation; the pre-war Pacific coast was, putting it mildly, a cultural desert. Many of the new writers and

artists came with the general influx of Easterners and Middle-westerners during the war; some were conscientious objectors who had been sent to concentration camps in the west; and some were people who found they could work here far better than in wartime New York.

It is still too early to catalogue all this turbulent activity, but I should say that the prevailing direction is toward anarchism and varieties of religious personalism. By and large, the attitude is similar to that for which *Now*, *Poetry London*, *Poetry Quarterly* and *Transformation* are spokesmen in England. Here, as in England, it is an attitude born of disgust with the bankruptcy of pre-war radical intellectuals who tended to statism in one form or another. The new people flatly reject those who, in the 'thirties, were voicing their indignation at capitalism and the State in the pages of *Partisan Review*, and who were not at all reluctant about selling themselves to the Office of War Information or simply keeping their mouths shut for the duration. The popularity of Henry Miller, a wartime arrival here, rests largely on his inspiring denunciations of the war, of his protest against the mass use of human lives to perpetuate a diseased society. Who, among the pillars of *Partisan Review*, turned 'defender of the Four Freedoms', could have been capable of writing *Murder the Murderer* which in the simplest terms said the same thing most radicals had said five or ten years before!

One of the few poets here whose reputation was established before the war is Kenneth Rexroth, long a resident of San Francisco, an advocate of pacifist-anarchism for many years. Excerpts from his two books of poems (*In What Hour* and *The Phoenix and the Tortoise*) have recently appeared in several English magazines. Rexroth extended the boundaries of objectivism and intentionally emphasized the anti-rhetorical image to develop a moving, highly personalized poetry. His long philosophical poem, *The Phoenix and the Tortoise*, is excellent for its erudition and metrical structure, and for its vision of the tragic interplay of individual and society; both tone and thought are at once religious and revolutionary.

Of the younger poets, William Everson, born in California, is notable for a unique earthiness and direct honesty rarely found in the thick literary quarterlies run by university-bred intellectuals. He has written and printed on his own press several booklets. His

best work to date is that written in a Civilian Public Service Camp for conscientious objectors. These poems (*War Elegies* and *Waldport Poems*) are intensely experiential and deal, as Everson has said, with 'a kind of life that has become almost universal: the life of the camp, the life of enforced confinement, individual repression, sexual segregation', the life of millions who, by the nature of our society, were, and are still being, forced into conscription, concentration, labour and prison camps. His poetry has been praised highly in many quarters, and soon a collected edition is being brought out by *New Directions*.

In most cases the poetry written out here seems to differ considerably from the usual thing one sees nowadays. There is a tendency to write simply, to say what is important only, that which deals with love, death and the personal experience. Most of it reflects, less and less, the experimentalism of the 'twenties and early 'thirties. There is Robert Duncan, author of the recent *Heavenly City, Earthly City*, a rather incantatory kind of poetry, very impassioned and, stylistically, akin to Milton and Surrey. Thomas Parkinson, who acknowledges affinities with Crabbe and Cowper, writes some very moving, personal poetry. Richard Moore's elegiac and pastoral poems have a quiet, almost restrained, quality about them, influenced, largely, by Chinese poetry. Sanders Russell writes what he calls a 'poetry of mental images', of a quietist, closely Oriental turn of mind. Another young poet who as yet has not published widely, is Robert Stock, attempting a personalization of a mystical-religious tradition in esoteric Christianity. Also notable is Janet Lewis, author of the recent *Bravery of Earth*, for many years a writer of well-balanced lyrical poetry in a modern, yet traditional, vein. Of the younger generation, we have a very promising talent displayed in the work of Patricia Umsted who has recently appeared in the little magazines. There are others, of course, young poets in their twenties of varying degrees of talent, of whom it is perhaps not necessary to speak at the moment. What I am getting at with these brief sidelights (which in themselves may not prove very important) is that there seems to be less interest in foreign importations than was the case with the writers who appeared between the pages of *transition*. The influence of symbolism, of the baroque or, for that matter, of surrealism, is not as apparent as before, though it most certainly does continue to be assimilated

in the poetry. The tendency is away from the over-rhetorical so popular a decade ago with imitators of Hart Crane.

Most of the local writers I mentioned above, including C.O.s, painters and other intellectuals, gathered together in an anarchist discussion group which held weekly meetings, in San Francisco, with the purpose of clarifying and re-evaluating libertarian thought. In the past, San Francisco had been quite a centre for anarchism. Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were here in the years before World War I, publishing their magazine *The Bomb*. Bakunin, himself, was here in the last century, California being the last outpost of the Black International. In the hey-day of Stalinism there remained only small, social groups cut off from the major political and intellectual stream. But slowly, and with the general discrediting of traditional socialist radicals, most young intellectuals have come to an entirely different point of view than what was represented by the major radical tendencies of the immediate past. Around here there has developed a non-doctrinaire anarchism, thoroughly lacking in the illusions of nineteenth-century thought; in short, a moral criticism of existing society. It is influenced by the dynamic vitalism of D. H. Lawrence, the Lawrence of *The Fantasia of the Unconscious* and *The Plumed Serpent*; by such works as Berdyaev's *Destiny of Man and Slavery and Freedom* that set forth a revolutionary Christian personalism, basically consistent with the orthodox tenets of anarchism; and by Albert Schweitzer whose interpretation of values, in *The Decay and Restoration of Civilization*, is an undeniable contribution. Living in a world of progressive inhumanity, at the tail-end of Western civilization, those who reject society have come to assume that the main validity of anarchism lies in terms of the individual's moral and social opposition; it is a philosophy of life for those who intend to keep themselves as clean as possible and who are ready to meet any drastic invasion of the State with a resistance of the whole personality.

Out of these meetings, there came the impetus towards the creation of a magazine. Entitled *The Ark*, it was planned as a gathering point for writers and artists dedicated to independent and non-statist positions. The first issue is appearing shortly with the inclusion of several English writers—Alex Comfort, George Woodcock and D. S. Savage, as well as such Americans as Paul Goodman, E. E. Cummings, Kenneth Patchen, etc. Also, as I am

writing this, I am informed of a proposed international journal of ethics and philosophy Mr. Rexroth is to edit. Proceeding from a libertarian basis, it will endeavour to include work by Berdyaev, Martin Buber, Suzuki, Roger Caillois, Camus, etc.

Independent of any movement is *Circle*, edited from Berkeley by the poet George Leite. It has pursued for nine issues a policy of publishing *avant-garde* literature and art from all corners of the world, as well as being an outlet for those living in this area. Leite is also the inaugurator of *Circle Editions*, which have recently brought out books by Lawrence Durrell, *Zero* and *The Black Book*, and Albert Cossery's *Men God Forgot*. Also being published from Berkeley is *Contour*, the first number appearing currently. In the past, the publisher of *New Directions*, James Laughlin, has given space to several California writers and is planning currently a little anthology of their poetry for the next *Annual*. Another publisher, Bern Porter, is continuing in the same direction, already having brought out books by several young poets around here, including Robert Duncan, Leonard Wolfe (*Hamadryad Hunted*) and myself (*Erotic Poems*).

That the influence of the various currents I have described is growing, can be evidenced by the numerous activities the San Francisco Bay Area has recently witnessed, ranging from poetry readings to the openings of new galleries and the public showings of *avant-garde* movies. And, in the midst of all this, a certain note of notoriety was struck by the appearance in a national monthly magazine, of wide circulation, *Harper's* for April 1947, of a sneering, in fact, libellous article by a personality described best by the word 'stalinoid'. Entitled 'The New Cult of Sex and Anarchy', it presented a very falsified picture of the general scene. Besides getting all mixed up about who represented what, the author accuses everyone with an anarchist position as being a follower of Wilhelm Reich's sometimes dubious psychology of orgasmic potency. It is true that in many intellectual circles here, as elsewhere, Reich's analysis of sexual disorganization in modern society, resulting from—and developing out of—the interplay of recent social and political currents, has attracted quite a response and, in some, an adherence. But in spite of the basic truthfulness of his findings, I know of few who have taken his word as the final one or who view his theories of biophysics with much approval. The *Harper's* article also went on to further

misrepresentations that have finally prompted, largely, the recent editorial drive the Hearst papers, through the efforts of the *San Francisco Examiner*, directed against Henry Miller, particularly, and the influence of anarchism, generally. Miller, who is not really affiliated with anarchism, has been living in the Big Sur redwood country south of San Francisco for several years. It is easy to be too critical of Miller's writings. He probably is not as great as his admirers would have one believe. It is also true that he mixes up Vivekananda and astrological readings with what is otherwise serious, well-directed writing. By what Miller says, and through his fabulous efforts to get heard, he has emerged as a force of no small importance. He has consistently denounced what needs to be denounced. His protest is designed, primarily, for the unsophisticated who may find him as the only voice of his kind audible, and through him be led to the sounder values of others in the past who have said the same things. Miller's world-view is that of an angry, yet humble, individual who refuses to make peace with a society in which inequality and brutality have probably degraded the human personality to a point never before witnessed in history. His cry is the death cry, to be sure; to some it may also be an expression of the coming of spring.

Attacking Miller as a 'philosopher of hate and doom', the articles against him have culminated in a Hearst drive to oust him and his influence from the Big Sur country. Again, the old stupidity and bigotry of America are at work, and may easily culminate in violence; such a move, even if it does not lead to open violence by the defenders of the *status quo*, is a reminder, to all those who may have forgotten, that unless a writer toes the line, or keeps quiet, he remains an implacable enemy of an order of things whose God is Mammon and a nation now living off the blood of war and the spiritual, economic and social disorganization of the rest of the world.

THE IMAGINARY JEW

JOHN BERRYMAN

THE second summer of the European War I spent in New York. I lived in a room just below street-level on Lexington above 34th, wrote a good deal, tried not to think about Europe, and listened to music on a small gramophone, the only thing of my own, except books, in the room. Haydn's London symphony, his last, I heard probably fifty times in two months. One night when excited I dropped the pickup, creating a series of knocks at the beginning of the last movement where the oboe joins the strings which still, when I hear them, bring up for me my low, dark, long, damp room and I feel the dew of heat and smell the rented upholstery. I was trying as one says to come back a little, uncertain and low after an exhausting year. Why I decided to do this in New York—the enemy in summer equally of soul and body, as I had known for years—I can't remember; perhaps I didn't, but was held on merely from week to week by the motive which presently appeared in the form of a young woman met the Christmas before and now the occupation of every evening not passed in solitary and restless gloom. My friends were away; I saw few other people. Now and then I went to the zoo in lower Central Park and watched with interest the extraordinary behaviour of a female badger. For a certain time she quickly paced the round of her cage. Then she would approach the sidewall from an angle in a determined, hardly perceptible, unhurried trot; suddenly, when an inch away, point her nose up it, follow her nose up over her back, turning a deft and easy somersault, from which she emerged on her feet moving swiftly and unconcernedly away, as if the action had been no affair of hers, indeed she had scarcely been present. There was another badger in the cage who never did this, and nothing else about her was remarkable: but this competent disinterested somersault she enacted once every five or ten minutes so long as I watched her—quitting the wall, by the way, always at an angle in fixed relation to the angle at which she arrived at it. It is no longer possible to experience the pleasure I knew each time she lifted her nose and I understood again that she would not fail me, or feel the mystery of her absolute disclaimer—she has been taken away or died.

The story I have to tell is no further a part of that special summer than a nightmare takes its character, for memory, from the phase of the moon one noticed on going to bed. It could have happened in another year and in another place. No doubt it did, has done, will do. Still, so weak is the talent of the mind for pure relation—immaculate apprehension of *p* alone—that everything helps us, as when we come to an unknown city: architecture, history, trade-practices, folklore. Even more anxious our approach to a city (like my small story) which we have known and forgotten. Yet how little we can learn! Some of the history is the lonely summer. Part of the folklore, I suppose, is that which I now unwillingly rehearse, the character which experience has given to my sense of the Jewish people.

Born in a part of the South where no Jews had come, or none had stayed, and educated thereafter in States where they are numerous, I somehow arrived at a metropolitan university without any clear idea of what in modern life a Jew was—without even consciousness of having seen one. I am unable now to explain this simplicity or blindness. I had not escaped, of course, a sense that humans somewhat different from ourselves, called 'Jews', existed as in the middle distance and were best kept there, but this sense was of the vaguest. From what it was derived I do not know; I do not recall feeling the least curiosity about it, or about Jews; I had, simply, from the atmosphere of an advanced heterogeneous democratic society, ingathered a gently negative attitude towards Jews. This I took with me, untested, to college, where it received neither confirmation nor stimulus for two months. I rowed and danced and cut classes and was political; by mid-November I knew most of the five hundred men in my year. Then the man who rowed Number Three, in the eight of which I was bow, took me aside in the shower one afternoon and warned me not to be so chatty with Rosenblum.

I wondered why not. Rosenblum was stroke, a large handsome amiable fellow, for whose ability in the shell I felt great respect and no doubt envy. Because the fellows in the House wouldn't like it, my friend said. 'What have they against him?' 'It's only because he's Jewish,' explained my friend, a second-generation Middle European.

I hooted at him, making the current noises of disbelief, and went back under the shower. It did not occur to me that he could be

right. But next day when I was talking with Herz—our coxswain—I remembered the libel with some annoyance, and told Herz about it as a curiosity. Herz looked at me oddly, lowering his head, and said after a pause, 'Why, Al is Jewish, didn't you know that?' I was amazed. I said it was absurd, he couldn't be! 'Why not?' said Herz, who must have been as astonished as I was. 'Don't you know I'm Jewish?'

I did not know, of course, and ignorance has seldom cost me such humiliation. Herz did not guy me; he went off. But greater than my shame at not knowing something known, apparently, without effort to everyone else, were my emotions for what I then quickly discovered. Asking careful questions during the next week, I learnt that about a third of the men I spent time with in college were Jewish; that they knew it, and the others knew it; that some of the others disliked them for it, and they knew this also; that certain Houses existed *only* for Jews, who were excluded from the rest; and that what in short I took to be an idiotic state was deeply established, familiar, and acceptable to everyone. This discovery was the beginning of my instruction in social life—properly construing social life as that from which political life issues like a somatic dream.

My attitude towards my friends did not alter on this revelation. I merely discarded the notion that Jews were a proper object for any special attitude; my old sense vanished. This was in 1933. Later, as word of the German persecution filtered into this country, some sentimentality undoubtedly corrupted my no-attitude. I denied the presence of obvious defects in particular Jews, feeling that to admit them would be to side with the sadists and murderers. Accident allotting me close friends who were Jewish, their disadvantages enraged me. Gradually, and against my sense of impartial justice, I became the anomaly which only a partial society can produce, and for which it has no name known to the lexicons. In one area, not exclusively, 'nigger-lover' is flung in a proximate way: but for a special sympathy with and liking for Jews—which became my fate, so that I trembled when I heard one abused in talk—we have no term. In this condition I still was during the summer of which I speak. One further circumstance may be mentioned, as a product, I believe, of this curious training. I am spectacularly unable to identify Jews as Jews—by name, cast of feature, accent, or environment—and

this has been true, not only of course before the college incident, but during my whole life since. Even names to anyone else patently Hebraic rarely suggest to me anything. And when once I learn that So-and-so is Jewish, I am likely to forget it. Now Jewishness—the religion or the race—may be a fact as striking and informative as someone's past heroism or his Christianity or his understanding of the subtlest human relations, and I feel sure that something operates to prevent my utilizing the signs by which such characters—in a Jewish man or woman—may sometimes be identified, and prevent my retaining the identification once it is made.

So to the city my summer and a night in August. I used to stop on Fourteenth Street for iced coffee, walking from the Village home (or to my room rather) after leaving my friend, and one night when I came out I wandered across to the island of trees and grass and concrete walks raised in the centre of Union Square. Here men—a few women, old—sit in the evenings of summer, looking at papers or staring off or talking, and knots of them stay on, arguing, very late; these the unemployed or unemployable, the sleepless, the malcontent. There are no formal orators, as at Columbus Circle in the nineteen-thirties and at Hyde Park Corner. Each group is dominated by several articulate and strong-lunged persons who battle each other with prejudices and desires, swaying with intensity, and take on from time to time the interrupters: a forum at the bottom of the pot—Jefferson's fear, Whitman's hope, the dream of the younger Lenin. It was now about one o'clock, almost hot, and many men were still out. I stared for a little at the equestrian statue, obscure in the night on top of its pedestal, thinking that the misty Rider would sweep away again all these men at his feet, whenever he liked—what symbol for power yet in a mechanical age rivals the mounted man?—and moved to the nearest group; or I plunged to it.

The dictator to the group was old, with dark cracked skin, fixed eyes in an excited face, leaning forward madly on his bench towards the half-dozen men in semicircle before him. 'It's bread! it's bread!' he was saying. 'It's bitter-sweet. All the bitter and all the sweetness. Of an overture. What else do you want? When you ask for steak and potatoes, do you want pastry with it? It's bread! It's bread! Help yourself! Help yourself!'

The listeners stood expressionless, except one who was smiling with contempt and interrupted now.

'Never a happy minute, never a happy minute!' the old man cried. 'It's good to be dead! Some men should kill themselves.'

'Don't you want to live?' said the smiling man.

'Of course I want to live. Everyone wants to live! If death comes suddenly it's better. It's better!'

With pain I turned away. The next group were talking diffusely and angrily about the Mayor, and I passed to a third, where a frantic olive-skinned young man with a fringe of silky beard was exclaiming: 'No restaurant in New York has the Last Supper! No. When people sit down to eat they should think of that!'

'Listen,' said a white-shirted student on the rail, glancing around for approbation, 'listen, if I open a restaurant and put *The Last Supper* up over the door, how much money do you think I'd lose? Ten thousand dollars?'

The fourth cluster was larger and appeared more coherent. A savage argument was in progress between a man of fifty with an oily red face, hatted, very determined in manner, and a muscular fellow half his age with heavy eyebrows, coatless, plainly Irish. Fifteen or twenty men were packed around them and others on a bench near the rail against which the Irishman was lounging were attending also. I listened for a few minutes. The question was whether the President was trying to get us into the war—or rather, whether this was legitimate, since the Irishman claimed that Roosevelt was a goddamned warmonger whom all the real people in the country hated, and the older man claimed that we should have gone into the f—ing war when France fell a year before, as everybody in the country knew except a few immigrant rats. Redface talked ten times as much as the Irishman, but he was not able to establish any advantage that I could see. He ranted, and then Irish either repeated shortly and fiercely what he had said last, or shifted his ground. The audience were silent—favouring whom I don't know, but evidently much interested. One or two men pushed out of the group, others arrived behind me, and I was eddied forward towards the disputants. The young Irishman broke suddenly into a tirade by the man with the hat:

'Your full of s— Roosevelt even tried to get us in with the communists in the Spanish war. If he could have done it we'd have been burning churches down like the rest of the Reds.'

'No, that's not right,' I heard my own voice, and pushed forward, feeling blood in my face, beginning to tremble. 'No,

Roosevelt, as a matter of fact, helped Franco by non-intervention, at the same time that Italians and German planes were fighting against the Government and arms couldn't get in from France.'

'What's that? What are you, a Jew?' he turned to me contemptuously, and was back at the older man before I could speak, 'The only reason we weren't over there four years ago is because you can only screw us so much. Then we quit. No New Deal bastard could make us go help the goddamned communists.'

'That ain't the question, it's if we want to fight *now* or *later*. Them Nazis ain't gonna sit!' shouted the red-faced man. 'They got Egypt practically, and then it's India if it ain't England first. It ain't a question of the communists, the communists are on Hitler's side. I tellya we can wait and wait and chew and spit and the first thing you know they'll be in England, and then who's gonna help us when they start after us? Maybe Brazil? Get wise to the world! Spain don't matter now one way or the other, they ain't gonna help and they can't hurt. It's Germany and Italy and Japan, and if it ain't too late now it's gonna be. Get wise to yourself. We shoulda gone in—'

'What with?' said the Irishman with disdain. 'Pop pop. Wooden machine-guns?'

'We were as ready a year ago as we are now. Defence don't mean nothing, you gotta have to fight!'

'No, we're much better off now', I said, 'than we were a year ago. When England went in, to keep its word to Poland, what good was it to Poland? The German Army—'

'Shut up, you Jew,' said the Irishman.

'I'm not a Jew,' I said to him. 'What makes—'

'Listen, Pop,' he said to the man in the hat, 'it's O.K. to shoot your mouth off but what the hell have you got to do with it? You aren't gonna do any fighting.'

'Listen,' I said.

'You sit on your big ass and talk about who's gonna fight who. Nobody's gonna fight anybody. If we feel hot, we ought to clean up some of the sons of bitches here before we go sticking our nuts anywhere to help England. We ought to clean up the sons of bitches in Wall Street and Washington before we take any ocean trips. You want to know something? You know why Germany's winning everything in this war? Because there ain't no Jews back home. There ain't no more Jews, first shouting war like this one

here'—nodding at me—'and then skinning off to the synagogue with the profits. Wake up, Pop! You must have been around in the last war, you ought to know better.'

I was too nervous really to be angry or resentful. But I began to have a sense of oppression in breathing. I took the Irishman by the arm.

'Listen, I told you I'm not a Jew.'

'I don't give a damn what you are,' he turned his half-dark eyes to me, wrenching his arm loose. 'You talk like a Jew.'

'What does that mean?' Some part of me wanted to laugh. 'How does a Jew talk?'

'They talk like you, buddy.'

'That's a fine argument! But if I'm not a Jew, my talk only—'

'You probably are a Jew. You look like a Jew.'

'I *look* like a Jew? Listen,' I swung around eagerly to a man standing next me, 'do I look like a Jew? It doesn't matter whether I do or not—a Jew is as good as anybody and better than this son of a bitch—' I was not exactly excited, I was trying to adapt my language as my need for the crowd, and sudden respect for its judgement, possessed me—'but in fact I'm not Jewish and I don't look Jewish. Do I?'

The man looked at me quickly and said, half to me and half to the Irishman, 'Hell, I don't know. Sure he does.'

A wave of disappointment and outrage swept me almost to tears, I felt like a man betrayed by his brother. The lamps seemed brighter and vaguer, the night large. Glancing round I saw sitting on a bench near me a tall, heavy, serious-looking man of thirty, well dressed, whom I had noticed earlier, and appealed to him. 'Tell me, do I look Jewish?'

But he only stared up and waved his head vaguely. I saw with horror that something was wrong with him.

'You look like a Jew. You talk like a Jew. You are a Jew,' I heard the Irishman say.

I heard murmuring among the men, but I could see nothing clearly. It seemed very hot. I faced the Irishman again helplessly, holding my voice from rising.

'I'm *not* a Jew,' I told him. 'I might be, but I'm not. You have no bloody reason to think so, and you can't make me a Jew by simply repeating like an idiot that I am.'

'Don't deny it, son,' said the red-faced man, 'stand up to him.'

'God damn it,' suddenly I was furious, whirling like a fool

(was I afraid of the Irishman? Had he conquered me?) on the red-faced man, 'I'm *not* denying it! Or rather I am, but only because I'm not a Jew! I despise renegades, I hate Jews who turn on their people, if I were a Jew I would say so, I would be proud to be: what is the vicious opinion of a man like this to me if I were a Jew? But I'm not. Why the hell should I admit I am if I'm not?'

'Jesus, the Jew is excited,' said the Irishman.

'I have a right to be excited, you son of a bitch. Suppose I call you a Jew. Yes, you're a Jew. Does that mean anything?'

'Not a damn thing.' He spat over the rail past a man's shoulder.

'Prove that you're not. I say you are.'

'Now listen, you Jew. I'm a Catholic.'

'So am I, or I was born one, I'm not one now. I was born a Catholic.' I was a little calmer but goaded, obsessed with the need to straighten this out. I felt that everything for everyone there depended on my proving him wrong. If *once* this evil for which we have not even a name could be exposed to the rest of the men as empty—if I could *prove* I was not a Jew—it would fall to the ground, neither would anyone else be a Jew to be accused. Then it could be trampled on. Fascist America was at stake. I listened, intensely anxious, for our fate.

'Yeah?' said the Irishman. 'Say the Apostles' Creed.'

Memory went swirling back, I could hear the little bell die as I hushed it and set it on the felt, Father Boniface looked at me tall from the top of the steps and smiled greeting me in the darkness before dawn as I came to serve, the men pressed around me under the lamps, and I could remember nothing but *visibilum omnium. Et invisibilum?*

'I don't remember it.'

The Irishman laughed with his certainty.

The papers in my pocket, I thought them over hurriedly. In my wallet. What would they prove? Details of ritual, Church history: anyone could learn them. My piece of Irish blood. Shame, shame: shame for my ruthless people. I will not be his blood. I wish I were a Jew, I would change my blood, to be able to say *Yes* and defy him.

'I'm not a Jew,' I felt a fool. 'You only say so. You haven't any evidence in the world.'

He leaned forward from the rail, close to me. 'Are you cut?'

Shock, fear ran through me before I could make any meaning out of his words. Then they ran faster, and I felt confused.

From that point, nothing clearly. I stayed a long time—it seemed impossible to leave, showing him victor to them. I thought of possible allies and new plans of proof but without hope. I was tired to the marrow. The arguments rushed on, and I spoke often now but seldom was heeded except by an old fat woman, very short and dirty, who listened intently to everyone. Heavier and heavier appeared to me to press upon us in the fading night our general guilt.



In the days following, as my resentment died, I saw that I had not been a victim altogether unjustly. My persecutors were right: I was a Jew. The imaginary Jew I was was as real as the imaginary Jew hunted down, on other nights and days, in a real Jew. Every murderer strikes the mirror, the lash of the torturer falls on the mirror and cuts the real image, and the real and the imaginary blood flow down together.

AMERICAN ADVERTISING

HERBERT MARSHALL MCLUHAN

A FEW months ago an American army officer wrote for *Printer's Ink* from Italy. He noted with misgiving that Italians could tell you the names of cabinet ministers but not the names of commodities preferred by Italian celebrities. Furthermore, the wall space of Italian cities was given over to political rather than commercial slogans. Finally, he predicted that there was small hope that Italians would ever achieve any sort of domestic prosperity or calm until they began to worry about the rival claims of cornflakes or cigarettes rather than the capacities of public men. In fact, he went so far as to say that democratic freedom very largely consists in ignoring politics and worrying about the means of defeating under-arm odour, scaly scalp, hairy legs, dull complexion, unruly hair, borderline anæmia, athlete's foot, and sluggish bowels, not to mention ferro-nutritional deficiency of the blood, wash-day blues, saggy breasts, receding gums, shiny pants, greying hair, and excess weight. Here we are perhaps in the presence of an excluded middle rather than a *non sequitur*, because American advertising has developed into a jungle

of folk-lore beside which the tales from the Schwarzwald belong with Winnie-the-Pooh.

It is, therefore, quite possible that there is a core of political reality and even health in the wildly proliferating forms of American advertising. The hyperaesthesia of the ad.-men's rhetoric has knocked the public into a kind of groggy, slap-happy condition in which perhaps are cushioned a good many of the brutal shocks felt more keenly by the realistic European. Viewed merely as an interim strategy for maintaining hope, tolerance, and good-humour in an irrational world, this orgy of irrationalism may not be without its cathartic function. At any rate, the multi-billion dollar, nation-wide educational programmes of the ad.-men (dwarfing the outlay on formal education) provide a world of symbols, witticisms, and behaviour patterns which may or may not be a fatal solvent for the basic political traditions of America, but which certainly do comprise a common experience and a common language for a country whose sectional differences and technological specialisms might easily develop into anarchy. The comedian at the microphone or the professor in the classroom can always be sure of an effective gibe or illustration based on the ads. And both community and communication, in so far as they are managed at all at the popular level, are in the same debt. Moreover, by various means, the whole technique and hallucination of Hollywood has been assimilated to the ads. *via* pictorial glamour, so that the two are inseparable. They constitute one world.

It is just as well to preface a glance at American ads. with a consideration of the imponderables, because the ads. themselves are deceptively easy to assess. A similar abeyance of judgement about the social effects of the sadism purveyed, for example, by thriller and detective literature is indicated. For the extent to which armchair sadism, so fostered, acts as a preservative of good humour in a lethal and chaotic world it is impossible to say. But anybody can check for himself the fact that persons with a penchant for strong-arm political methods are not given to this form of fantasy life. It is, of course, true that the thriller and sleuth fans, from Poe to Ellery Queen, are the willing victims of a psychological trick. By identifying their mental processes with those of the man-hunter, the readers achieve a sort of megalomaniac thrill. At the same time they enjoy the illusion of sharing in the scientific techniques of the society which permits them almost no

other kind of congenial adjustment or direct participation. 'Happiness', said Swift, 'is the possession of being perpetually well-deceived.' And in a merely political regard we cannot any longer dispense with any source of happiness which will win us a bit of time while we consult the means of survival.

The intellectual claims to perceive and enjoy an order and symmetry in the world and in his own life denied to other men. He arms himself today against the impact of the stereotypes of commercialized culture by keenness of recognition and analysis and engages in a perpetual guerrilla activity. He is a sort of noble savage free-lancing amidst a zombie horde. The dangers attending this mode of existence are obvious. Should he find his energies suddenly depleted or his patience exasperated, he may be tempted to revive them by adopting some lethal myth-mechanism. And at all times he finds it hard to remember the common human nature which persists intact beneath all the modes of mental hysteria rampant from Machiavelli and Calvin until our own day. Yet it is only in the degree to which he is motivated by the benevolence imposed by the perception of the rational form rather than the psychological condition of all men, that he is justified or that he is tolerable. Benda was right. When the intellectual sells out to any brand of social or political neurosis, when fear or loneliness beckon him into some party, he is worse than useless. *Corruptio optimi pessima*.

American 'market research' which has developed very rapidly in the past ten years has a strong totalitarian squint—that of the social engineer. Two recent items will illustrate this. *Time* magazine for 22 July 1946, described a new gadget:

'The finished—but still uncut—picture [movie] is given the works with an electrical contraption called the Hopkins Tele-voting System. Each member of A.R.I.'s [Audience Research Inc.] hand-picked, cross-section audience sits in a wired section of a pre-view theater. With his eyes on the screen, he clutches a gadget that resembles a flashlight. On the gadget's round face is an indicator that can easily be turned with the fingers (see cut). A turn to the right means "Like", further right "Like Very Much". A left twist registers as "Dull" or "Very Dull". The emotional reactions of A.R.I.'s watchers flow into a central machine which combines them all into one big wavy line. This chart, picturing the audience's peaks of ecstasy and valleys of apathy, shows the

manufacturer where to trim out dull spots in his picture. It is known as a Preview Profile.

'Moviemakers used to throw good advertising money after bad to promote an expensive flop. A.R.I. advises just the opposite. If the Preview Profile looks bad, the ad. budget might just as well be slashed. If the preview pans out better than expected, the picture is given special treatment and bigger ballyhoo.'

Criteria of cinema art aside, this kind of action for direct social control is politics. It aims not only at providing more and more sensation, but at the exploitation of all emotional-sets and preferences as just so much raw material to be worked up by centralized control for purposes of super-profits. Clearly the manipulators of such controls are irresponsible and will probably so continue as long as the flow of merchandise and profits remains unchecked.

Meantime, these appetites for private power are inventing the means of possible political power for the future. And even these private activities are obviously political, indirectly. Perhaps, however, the relevant observation here is simply that appetite is essentially insatiable, and where it operates as the criterion of both action and enjoyment (that is, everywhere in the western world since the sixteenth century) it will infallibly discover congenial agencies (mechanical and political) of expression. Almost any political steps taken to curb the A.R.I. type of mind would inevitably transfer this private anarchy into a public tyranny, because that 'mind' is not an exceptional one—it is universal. Actually the A.R.I. type of activity provides our world with a spectacular externalized paradigm of its own inner drives. Creative political activity today, therefore, consists in rational contemplation of these paradigms. Carried out as an educational programme directed towards self-knowledge and self-criticism, the study of these sprightly fantasies of unrestricted appetitive life would constitute precisely that step towards moral and intellectual regeneration which we have always known must precede any sort of genuine improvement. To contemplate the products of our own appetites rather than to anathematize the people who are keen enough to exploit them—that is surely no programme which must await the setting up of committees or social machinery. It is the only form of adult education which could be called realistic and it is instantaneously practicable. That the highbrows have been content merely to cock a snook at

the fauna and flora of popular commercial culture is sufficient testimony to the superficiality with which they have envisaged the nature of politics.

In this respect, the American is in a much happier position than the Englishman whose advertisements are such half-hearted and apologetic attempts to externalize his hopes and fears and appetites. American advertising is Cartesian. The English is Baconian. The American responds to showmanship, clarity of layout and distinctness of formulation. The Englishman, to judge by his ads. (and I have some scores by me, collected in England over a period of three years), in his timid concern for demure good form falls into the empirical bog of self-defensive puns, archness, and snob-appeal. The American ad.-men put on a decisively superior show and provide the analyst with a much greater variety of lively game. But to establish a national pre-eminence in this province is not to make more general claims.

The second item illustrating the totalitarian techniques of American market research occurs in a paper called 'New Facts about Radio Research', by Arthur C. Nielsen, president of the A. C. Nielsen Company, 'the world's largest marketing research organization'. The paper appeared in 1946. It begins:

'A. C. Nielsen Company, founded in 1923, provides an example of outstanding success based on long, unswerving and intelligent devotion to a difficult but worthy task. Educated in various branches of engineering and science, and accustomed to dealing with tangible facts, the early leaders of this company were convinced that some means could be found to substitute facts for much of the guesswork then used in guiding corporate marketing operations.

'Despite the commercial failure of all methods developed during the first ten years of operation, despite staggering operating losses which twice brought them to the brink of disaster, this group of pioneers persevered—because the great importance of the goal was very clear, and because some of the experiments seemed to show promise.'

The tone of austere scientific dedication to a noble task is not phoney in any simple sense. The language of 'human service' is rooted in the respectable neurotic formula of Adam Smith—public good through private greed—a face-saving device which developed a complex face of its own in the nineteenth century.

In other words, the kind of self-deception in the language of 'public service' is no longer private, but is vertically and horizontally effective, in the English-speaking world at least. The Rousseauistic formula to get the good Society by liquidating 'civilization', or the Marxian formula to get the classless society by liquidating the 'middle-class', are psychologically analogous—massive mechanisms of evasion and irresponsibility.

Well, the Nielsen Company have now lifted the problem of estimating audience character from the level of conjecture to that of certitude. The advertiser sponsoring any given programme wants to know precisely:

- (a) Average duration of listening; i.e. 'holding power' of the programme.
- (b) Variations in audience size at each minute during the broadcast—to permit detection of programme elements which cause audience gains or losses, to locate commercials at moments when the audience is high, etc.
- (c) Whether the programme reaches homes that *already* use the product, or homes that offer opportunities for *conversion* of new users.

For this purpose the Nielsen Audimeter has been devised, 'the graphic recording instrument installed in a radio receiver in a scientifically selected radio home. By recording every twist of the dial, every minute of the day or night, the Audimeter obtains precious radio data not available through any other means.' The Audimeter's data are then tabulated by 'The Nielsen Decoder', which is only 'one of the many mechanized operations which are producing high values for NIELSEN RADIO INDEX clients'. And the installation of audimeters is determined 'with utmost care to insure precise proportioning in accordance with a long list of marketing characteristics, including: 1, City size; 2, Family size; 3, Number of rooms; 4, Education; 5, Occupation; 6, Income; 7, Type of dwelling; 8, Number of radio receivers. The characteristics of each N.R.I. home are re-checked monthly, and replacement homes are chosen in a manner which keeps the sample accurately balanced at all times.' Moreover, 'relations with N.R.I. homes are maintained on such a sound basis that home turnover is limited largely to unavoidable and normal occurrences (e.g. deaths, divorces, fires, removals)'.

The direction, as well as the appetitive drive, in this sort of

research (the Gallup Polls of public opinion are a more obvious but less impressive instance of the same thing) is to be noted in a recent book on *Reaching Juvenile Markets*. Like most American texts on advertising, it was written by a professional psychologist—in this case a child-psychologist. The book points to the enormous proportion of American income which is expended by and for children and analyses a variety of means for bringing child-pressure on the parents to increase and to control such expenditures. Children are more snobbish than adults, more concerned to conform to the tastes of the community in the use of well-known commercial brands, and so on. The schools offer a means for the subtle subsidization of various products. Special Lone Ranger and Superman radio features for children can do much, but the potentialities of this market are only beginning to be appreciated, etc.

A more common type of advertising manual, however, is that represented by *Psychology in Advertising* by A. T. Poffenberger, PH.D., SC.D., Professor of Psychology at Columbia University. This sort of book makes available to the copywriter the results of psychiatric research: 'The psychoanalysts have made popular the conception of a kind of behaviour which is a sort of compromise between the behaviour growing out of desire and thinking behaviour' (p. 15). To exploit the irrational and, at all times, to avoid the pitfalls of rational 'sales resistance' aroused by the inept ad. is the first law of advertising dynamics. Forty-four kinds of 'attention-getting power' are graded (p. 90) in accordance with their statistically tested potency in an average community. At the top of the list are: Appetite-hunger 9.2; Love of offspring 9.1; Health 9.0; Sex attraction 8.9. And at the end of the list: Amusement 5.8; Shyness 4.2; Teasing 2.6. 'Announcing the birth of a Petunia,' said an ad. in which a man and woman were bent over a flowerpot: 'It takes emotion to move merchandise. *Better Homes and Gardens* [a magazine] is perpetual emotion.'

Recently, with much public irritation being expressed at the blatancy, duration and frequency of radio commercials, careful tests have been made to determine the effect on the market. The result has been the discovery that irritation has great 'attention-getting power' and that those irritated in this respect are reliable customers. Nausea has, therefore, become a new principle of

commercial dynamics as of esthetics. It is not likely, however, to supplant but to reinforce the more familiar techniques, the most important of which is noted many times by Professor Poffenberger: 'An appeal through the visual representation of motion will almost invariably find the nerve paths for that motion open, and is thus bound both to get the attention of the reader and to induce in him some form of action' (p. 297). It is in their imaginative grasp of this dramatic principle that the American ad.-men are first and the rest nowhere.

'Have you the courage to look ready for Romance? Want to look like a dream walking? . . . Well, you can, so easily! *Just by changing your powder-shade!* . . . A delightful "come hither" look that's so young and feminine—so very inviting!' (A bride in wedding-dress is joyfully whispering this to a thoughtful lady.)

A rugged and determined man with a cigar glints at the reader of a full-page ad. of a clothing shop: 'I'm TOUGH. Panty-waist stuff burns me. Work ten hours a day. Been at it since I was a kid. Gang at the plant call me "Chief". Own the place, now. Sure I've made money. Not a million—but enough to buy steak . . . And good clothes. Been getting my duds at Bond's ever since I shed knee pants. . . . No big promises. No arty labels dangling high-hat prices. Just good clothes with plenty of guts.'

Obviously the dramatic ad. is a maker of 'patterns for living' as much as the speech and gestures of movie idols. The peculiar idiom of a dead-end kid or a psychological freak may thus be sent up to the firing line of a nation-wide advertising campaign to provide temporary emotional strategies for millions of adolescents: A wishful but futile gent beside a self-possessed girl on a love-seat: 'I love you!' said Pete. 'I like you, too!' said Ann. 'Tell me more,' said Pete. 'You look so nice, especially around the neck.' 'Ah,' said Pete. 'That is my Arrow Collar.' . . . P.S. Tough, Pete. But remember—where there's an Arrow, can a girl be far behind? The ads. help old and young to 'get hep'.

An extremely popular technique is the dramatic sequence presented in four or five separate scenes: Tommy comes home from school with a black eye and is questioned by his lovely young mother. He reluctantly tells her that the kids have been taunting him about how his father is going out with other women. He has had to defend his mother's sex-appeal. Mortified, she hastens to get the appropriate toothpaste. Next morning,

Mom, radiant in panties and bra', brushing her teeth in the bathroom, tells Tommy 'it works'. Later, Tommy and his friends peek round the corner into the living-room where Dad is waltzing Mom around to radio music. 'Gee,' says one of the kids, 'looks like he's going to haul off and kiss her.' 'Yep,' says Tommy, 'you can't say my Dad hangs around with other girls now.' This sort of ad. appears in the Sunday Comic Section. Reaching the Juvenile Market.

'Success story of a man in a high position.' Picture of blithesome business man seated aloft in the petals of a huge daffodil: 'Sitting pretty? You bet . . . this fellow knows how to win and influence customers! He keeps track of their important business events and honours each occasion by sending wonderful fresh flowers by Wire.' The wit of the pictorial feature includes an allusion to Jack's bean-stalk.

A nearly nude debutante with zestful abandon applying perfume and sparkling at the reader: 'I'm using "Unconditional Surrender" since he got 6NX Appeal!' 'How can *you* get 6NX Appeal? . . . by using the only blades created by the scientific, secret 6NX process. . . . "Single" men can reach for a star, too!' This is typical of the indirect approach to the American male. Psychological tests prove that he is shy of direct efforts to interest him in glamorizing himself. As social catalysts the ads. help also to overcome boy-girl shyness. The girl spots 6NX or some other approved mark of compliance with nationally accredited goods. The boy smells 'Unconditional Surrender', and the first thing you know they're able to converse. College courses in 'charm' and 'gallantry' may soon be unnecessary.

A beautiful girl seated by the telephone while Mom, troubled, hovers in doorway: 'Borderline Anæmia deprives a girl of glamour . . . and dates! Medical science says: Thousands who have pale faces—whose strength is at low ebb—may have a blood deficiency. So many girls are "too tired" to keep up with the crowd—watch romance pass them by because they haven't the energy to make them attractive!'

These ads. console and encourage the forlorn by picturing the solitude and neglect suffered by the most ravishing chicks. They analyse the causes of every type of human failure and indicate the scientifically certified formula for 'instantaneous or money-back results'. The fault is not in our stars but our jars that we are

underlings. They display the most ordinary persons surrounded by luxury and old-world charm, suggesting that 'a prince and a castle are given away free with every package'. The most trashy types of food, crockery, or furniture are exhibited in palatial circumstances. And this 'law of association' leads the larger business monopolies to sponsor 'the arts' by presenting their product always in conjunction with some aroma of the old masters of paint, pen or music. But just how far these billionaire campaigns of systematic sophistry and hallucination contribute to worsening any given state of affairs would be hard to say. Because there is really nothing in these richly efflorescent ads. which has not been deeply wished by the population for a long time. They aren't so much phenomena of a Machiavellian tyranny as the poor man's orchids—both a compensation and a promise for beauty denied. Now, moreover, that the luxuriant and prurient chaos of human passions is thrust forward and gyrated in this way for our daily contemplation, there is the increasing possibility of the recovery of rational detachment. The authors of the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution were not obsessed with some compulsive psychological strategy for disguising their own irrational wishes or intentions like a Rousseau or a Nietzsche. And their wisdom is far from extinct in the U.S.A. So that, should the energy which activates the ad.-men (and the industrial stalks on which they are the passion-flowers) be transferred to the world of political speculation and creation, America could still fulfil many of its broken Utopian promises, because its Jeffersonian tradition is still intact, and likewise its psychological vigour. The two things aren't flowing in the same channels, however, and that is precisely the thing which could be brought about by a frank educational programme based on the curriculum provided by the ad.-men.

LOS ANGELES

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

IN order to get the worst possible first impression of Los Angeles one should arrive there by bus, preferably in summer and on a Saturday night. That is what I did, eight years ago, having crossed the country via Washington, New Orleans, El Paso, Albuquerque and Flagstaff, Arizona. As we passed over the State-line at Needles (one of the hottest places, outside Arabia, in the world) a patriotic lady traveller started to sing 'California, here I come!' In America you can do this kind of thing unselfconsciously on a long-distance bus: a good deal of the covered-wagon atmosphere still exists. Nevertheless, the effect was macabre. For ahead of us stretched the untidy yellow desert, quivering in its furnace-glare, with, here and there, among the rocks at the roadside, the rusty skeleton of an abandoned automobile, modern counterpart of the pioneer's dead mule. We drove forward into the unpromising land.

Beyond the desert, the monster market-garden begins: thousands of acres of citrus groves, vineyards, and flat fields planted with tomatoes and onions. The giant billboards reappear. The Coca-Cola advertisement: 'Thirst ends here'. The girl telling her friend: 'He's tall, dark . . . and owns a Ford V8'. The little towns seem almost entirely built of advertisements. Take these away, you feel, and there would be scarcely anything left: only drugstores, filling-stations and unpainted shacks. And fruit; Himalayas of fruit. To the European immigrant, this rude abundance is nearly as depressing as the desolation of the wilderness. The imagination turns sulky. The eye refuses to look and the ear to listen.

Down-town Los Angeles is at present one of the most squalid places in the United States. Many of the buildings along Main Street are comparatively old, but they have not aged gracefully. They are shabby and senile, like nasty old men. The stifling sidewalks are crowded with sailors and Mexicans; but here is none of the glamour of a port and none of the charm of a Mexican city. In twenty-five years, this section will probably have been torn down and rebuilt; for Los Angeles is determined to become at all costs a metropolis. Today it is still an unco-ordinated expanse of townlets and suburbs, spreading wide and white over the sloping plain between the mountains and the Pacific Ocean. The Angeleno

becomes accustomed to driving great distances in his car between his work, his entertainment and his home: eighty miles a day would not be very unusual. Most people have a car or the use of one. It is an essential, not a luxury; for the bus services are insufficient and there is no subway. I would scarcely know how to 'show' Los Angeles to a visitor. Perhaps the best plan would be to drive quite aimlessly, this way and that, following the wide streets of little stucco houses, gorgeous with flowering trees and bushes—jacaranda, oleander, mimosa and eucalyptus—beneath a technicolor sky. The houses are ranged along communal lawns, unfenced, staring into each other's bedroom windows, without even a pretence of privacy. Such are the homes of the most inquisitive nation in the world; a nation which demands, as its unquestioned right, the minutest details of the lives of its movie stars, politicians and other public men. There is nothing furtive or unfriendly about this American curiosity, but it can sometimes be merciless.

It should not be supposed, from what I have written above, that the architecture of Los Angeles is uniform or homogeneous. On the contrary, it is strongly, and now and then insanely, individualistic. Aside from all the conventional styles—Mexican, Spanish, French Château, English Tudor, American Colonial and Japanese—you will find some truly startling freaks: a witch's cottage with nightmare gables and eaves almost touching the ground, an Egyptian temple decorated with hieroglyphics, a miniature medieval castle with cannon on the battlements. Perhaps the influence of the movies is responsible for them. Few of the buildings look permanent or entirely real. It is rather as if a gang of carpenters might be expected to arrive with a truck and dismantle them next morning.

North of Hollywood rises a small steep range of hills. In the midst of the city, they are only half-inhabited; many of their canyons are still choked with yuccas, poison oak and miscellaneous scrub. You find rattlesnakes there, and deer and coyotes. At dusk, or in the first light of dawn, the coyotes can be mistaken for dogs, as they come trotting along the trail in single file, and it is strange and disconcerting to see them suddenly turn and plunge into the undergrowth with the long easy leap of the wild animal. Geologically speaking, the Hollywood hills won't last long. Their decomposed granite breaks off in chunks at a kick and crumbles in your hand. Every year the seasonal rains wash cartloads of it down into the valley.

In fact, the landscape, like Los Angeles itself, is transitional. Impermanence haunts the city, with its mushroom industries—the aircraft perpetually becoming obsolete, the oil which must one day be exhausted, the movies which fill America's theatres for six months and are forgotten. Many of its houses—especially the grander ones—have a curiously disturbing atmosphere, a kind of psychological dankness which smells of anxiety, overdrafts, uneasy lust, whisky, divorce and lies. 'Go away,' a wretched little ghost whispers from the closet, 'go away before it is too late. I was vain. I was silly. They flattered me. I failed. You will fail, too. Don't listen to their promises. Go away. Now, at once.' But the new occupant seldom pays any attention to such voices. Indeed he is deaf to them, just as the pioneers were deaf to the ghosts of the goldfields. He is quite sure that he knows how to handle himself. He'll make his pile; and he'll know when to stop. No stupid mistakes for *him*. No extravagance, no alimony, no legal complications. . . . And then the lawyer says: 'Never mind all that small print: it doesn't mean a thing. All you have to do is sign here.' And he signs.

California is a tragic country—like Palestine, like every promised land. Its short history is a fever-chart of migrations—the land rush, the gold rush, the oil rush, the movie rush, the Okie fruit-picking rush, the wartime rush to the aircraft factories—followed, in each instance, by counter migrations of the disappointed and unsuccessful, moving sorrowfully homeward. You will find plenty of people in the Middle West and in the East who are very bitter against California in general and Los Angeles in particular. They complain that the life there is heartless, materialistic, selfish. But emigrants to Eldorado have really no right to grumble. Most of us come to the Far West with somewhat cynical intentions. Privately, we hope to get something for nothing—or, at any rate, for very little. Well, perhaps we shall. But if we don't, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

The movie industry—to take the most obvious example—is still very like a goldmining camp slowly and painfully engaged in transforming itself into a respectable, ordered community. Inevitably, the process is violent. The anarchy of the old days, with every man for himself and winner take the jackpot, still exercises an insidious appeal. It is not easy for the writer who earns 3,000 dollars a week to make common cause with his colleague

who only gets 250. The original tycoons were not monsters; they were merely adventurers, in the best and worst sense of the word. They had risked everything and won—often after an epic and ruthless struggle—and they thought themselves entitled to every cent of their winnings. Their attitude toward their employees, from stars down to stage-hands, was possessive and paternalistic. Knowing nothing about art and very little about technique, they did not hesitate to interfere in every stage of film production—blue-pencilling scripts, dictating casting, bothering directors and criticizing camera angles. The spectre of the box-office haunted them night and day. This was their own money, and they were madly afraid of losing it. 'There's nothing so cowardly,' a producer once told me, 'as a million dollars.' The paternalist is a sentimentalist at heart, and the sentimentalist is always potentially cruel. When the studio operatives ceased to rely upon their bosses' benevolence and organized themselves into unions, the tycoon became an injured papa, hurt and enraged by their ingratitude. If the boys didn't trust him—well, that was just too bad. He knew what was good for them, and to prove it he was ready to use strikebreakers and uniformed thugs masquerading as special police. But the epoch of the tycoons is now, happily, almost over. The financier of today has learnt that it pays better to give his artists and technicians a free hand, and to concentrate his own energies on the business he really understands; the promotion and distribution of the finished product. The formation of independent units within the major studios is making possible a much greater degree of co-operation between directors, writers, actors, composers and art directors. Without being childishly optimistic, one can foresee a time when quite a large proportion of Hollywood's films will be entertainment fit for adults, and when men and women of talent will come to the movie colony not as absurdly overpaid secretaries resigned to humouring their employers but as responsible artists free and eager to do their best.

Greed is, however, only one of two disintegrating forces which threaten the immigrant's character: the other, far more terrible, is sloth. Out there, in the eternal lazy morning of the Pacific, days slip away into months, months into years; the seasons are reduced to the faintest nuance by the great central fact of the sunshine; one might pass a lifetime, it seems, between two yawns, lying bronzed and naked on the sand. The trees keep their green, the flowers

perpetually bloom, beautiful girls and superb boys ride the foaming breakers. They are not always the same boys, girls, flowers and trees; but that you scarcely notice. Age and death are very discreet there; they seem as improbable as the Japanese submarines which used to lurk up and down the coast during the war and sometimes sink ships within actual sight of the land. I need not describe the *de luxe*, park-like cemeteries which so hospitably invite you to the final act of relaxation: Aldous Huxley has done this classically already in *After Many a Summer*. But it is worth recalling one of their advertisements, in which a charming, well-groomed, elderly lady (presumably risen from the dead) assured the public: 'It's better at Forest Lawn. *I speak from experience.*'

To live sanely in Los Angeles (or, I suppose, in any other large American city) you have to cultivate the art of staying awake. You must learn to resist (firmly but not tensely) the unceasing hypnotic suggestions of the radio, the billboards, the movies and the newspapers; those demon voices which are forever whispering in your ear what you should desire, what you should fear, what you should wear and eat and drink and enjoy, what you should think and do and be. They have planned a life for you—from the cradle to the grave and beyond—which it would be easy, fatally easy, to accept. The least wandering of the attention, the least relaxation of your awareness, and already the eyelids begin to droop, the eyes grow vacant, the body starts to move in obedience to the hypnotist's command. Wake up, wake up—before you sign that seven-year contract, buy that house you don't really want, marry that girl you secretly despise. Don't reach for the whisky; that won't help you. You've got to think, to discriminate, to exercise your own free will and judgement. And you must do this, I repeat, without tension, quite rationally and calmly. For if you give way to fury against the hypnotists, if you smash the radio and tear the newspaper to shreds, you will only rush to the other extreme and fossilize into defiant eccentricity. Hollywood's two polar types are the cynically drunken writer aggressively nursing a ten-year-old reputation and the theatrically self-conscious hermit who strides the boulevard in sandals, home-made shorts and a prophetic beard, muttering against the Age of the Machines.

An afternoon drive from Los Angeles will take you up into the high mountains, where eagles circle above the forests and the cold blue lakes, or out over the Mojave Desert, with its weird vegetation

and immense vistas. Not very far away are Death Valley and Yosemite, and the Sequoia Forest with its giant trees which were growing long before the Parthenon was built; they are the oldest living things in the world. One should visit such places often, and be conscious, in the midst of the city, of their surrounding presence. For this is the real nature of California and the secret of its fascination; this untamed, undomesticated, aloof, prehistoric landscape which relentlessly reminds the traveller of his human condition and the circumstances of his tenure upon the earth. 'You are perfectly welcome,' it tells him, 'during your short visit. Everything is at your disposal. Only, I must warn you, if things go wrong, don't blame me. I accept no responsibility. I am not part of your neurosis. Don't cry to me for safety. There is no home here. There is no security in your mansions or your fortresses, your family vaults or your banks or your double beds. Understand this fact, and you will be free. Accept it, and you will be happy.'

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

THIS is but one of several numbers which could be made about America and makes no claim to exclusivity. Many other writers were called, but few chose.

The first part, two analyses and a case-history, indicates the predicament of the artist in America. William Phillips and Clement Greenberg are editors of *Partisan Review*. William Barrett is a young critic, author of a pamphlet *What is Existentialism?* Auden has an 'eclogue' ready, 'The Age of Anxiety'. Cummings' last book, *One Times One*, has just been published by HORIZON. An exhibition of Ben Shahn was held at the Mayor Gallery in April. James Soby is author, among much else, of *The Early Chirico*, and other Museum of Modern Art books.

Joe Alsop is the well-known publicist and diplomatic correspondent of the *New York Herald*. William Abrahams is a professor at Harvard, Jacques Barzun at Columbia University. Donald Windham is a young writer whose first book of stories about Atlanta, *Warm Summer*, will include the title story which appeared in HORIZON. Ralph Ellison is a young negro writer; *The Invisible Man* is his first novel. John Berryman, who defends the other minority, is a poet. Philip Lamantia is another young poet, an ex-Surrealist, and H. M. McLuhan a lecturer at Toronto University. Walker Evans is the author of *American Photographs*, and, with James Agee, of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, Christopher Isherwood is now touring South America to make a travel book. Everything in the number is here published for the first time, except *The Imaginary Jew*, which appeared in the *Kenyon Review*.

Our warmest gratitude is due to those who found time to write their special articles for this number, and in particular to Mr. Anthony Bower, of *New Directions*, for patiently acting as our New York representative.

PRIOR to 1914 British publishers included only a very small proportion of American authors in their lists. American firms, for their part, had to look largely to this country and Europe for the bulk of their authors. But since that time a very different picture has come about. A new type of literature has developed and an entirely new range of techniques has been created across the Atlantic. Time will show how much the literature of the Old World owes to this exciting and highly interesting invasion. Here in Europe, the American technique has affected the whole range of the writer's craft from the short story for the woman's magazine to the contemporary novel. On balance, the result is a decided improvement. We have no space to discuss any demerits.

We suggest that some American authors do not think of the British market when completing their MSS. It can be, after all, a valuable monetary one. In many cases there will be readers anxious to see their work. A carbon copy of an MS. sent to us will be quickly reported on as to its possibilities for this country.

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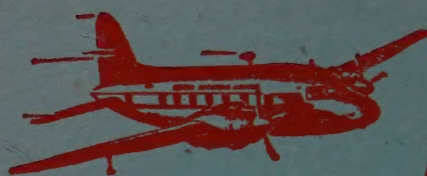
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